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NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

FX



MAKE CASH!

THE ART OF COMMISSIONS

The do's and don'ts of painting for clients

WIZARD ADVICE

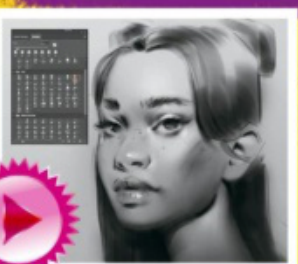
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Create a portfolio for Magic: The Gathering

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Welcome to... NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX



There's a cornucopia of advice and insight within the pages of this issue. There are two fantastic portrait workshops, both unique and insightful in their own ways. There's also a workshop dedicated to showing you what Magic: The Gathering look for in portfolios.

Most important, though, is our feature on the do's and don'ts of commissioning on page 22. Every artist has to navigate this tricky path at some point and it can be hard to emotionally detach from your work. I appreciated the candour of the artists who featured in this story. Over six pages we guide you through contracts, earnings, plus what and when and how to charge. It's important to talk openly about the business side of art. I hope that it helps you understand the value your work and to consider the cost associated with what you create.

Also you know we always love to see what you're painting, so please submit your work to our FXPosé section. We have digital and traditional gallery sections, so please visit <http://ifxm.ag/getinifx> to find out what you need to send in.

Claire

Claire Howlett, Editor
@imaginefx.com

EDITOR'S CHOICE Three of my top picks this month...

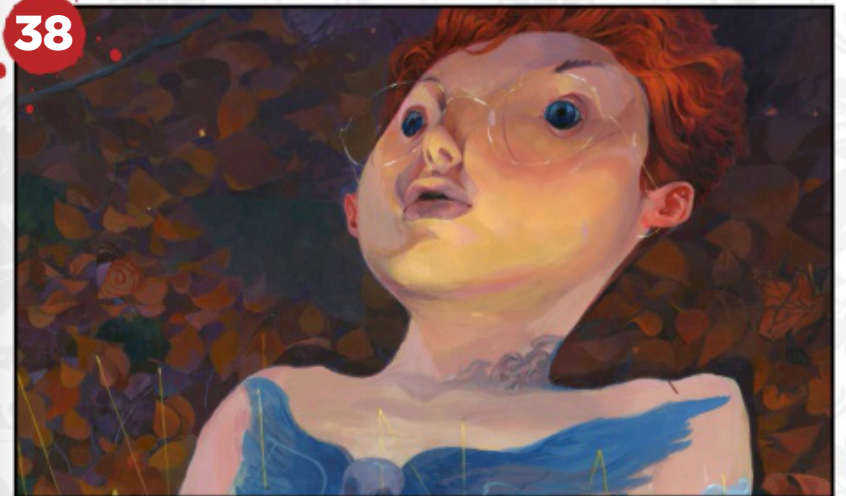
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How to charge for your art

Do whatever it takes to remember the commissioning advice from these professional artists.

38



Conversation pieces

Andrew manages to capture something surprisingly intimate in his large-scale works. They really speak to me.

104



Watercolour workshop

Snuggly pile of dragons? Yes please! Where do I sign up for a monthly delivery of Emily Hare's art...?

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You submit your work to us and we then show your gorgeous art to the world!

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Gang signs and agriculture: the Cambodian-American artist reveals how his art was shaped by growing up between two very different cultures...

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Grungy cyberpunk imagery rubs shoulders with fantastical figures and anatomy exercises on the pages of this concept artist's sketchbook.

56 **Interview: Alex Konstad**

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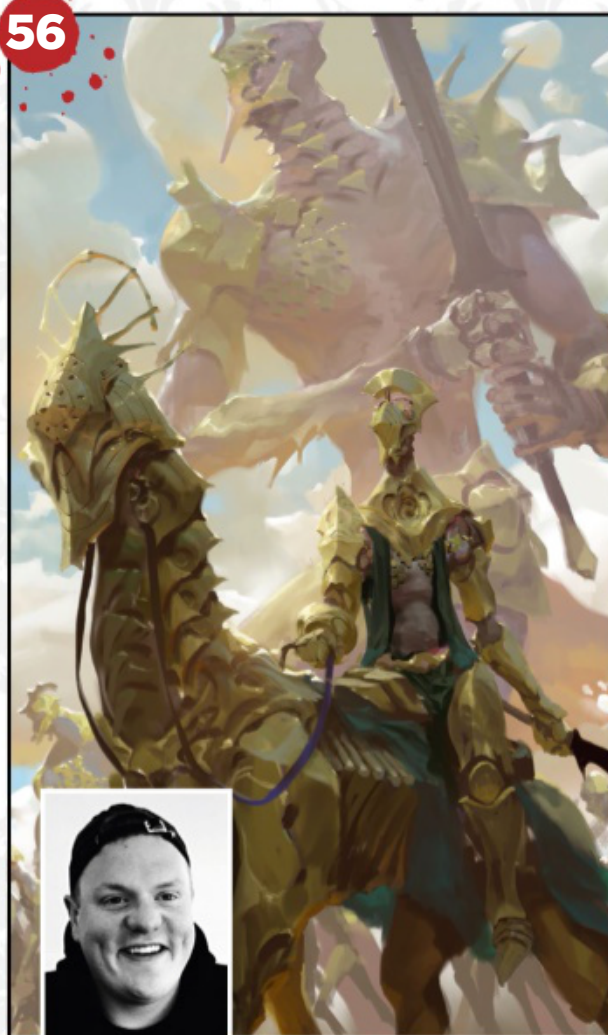
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Artist Portfolio
ANDREW HEM
"Good art is something that moves you, that evokes emotion"

Andrew gets to the heart of it

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Artist Portfolio
ALEX KONSTAD
"I'm just trying to keep things strange and different..."

Alex's portfolio hits these targets

22



Commissioning do's and don'ts

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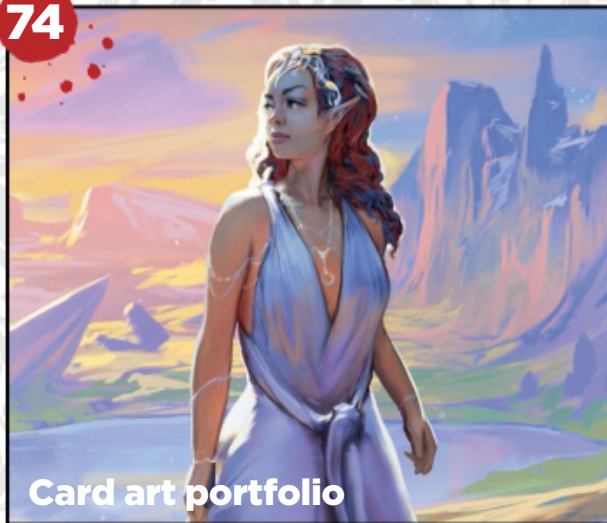
Artist in Residence:
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Daniel Bolling Walsh makes use of custom brushes and a range of Photoshop layer modes to create a painterly portrait piece.

74 Create a card art portfolio

Illustrator Noah Bradley shows how he paints strong, impactful artwork for card games such as Magic: The Gathering.

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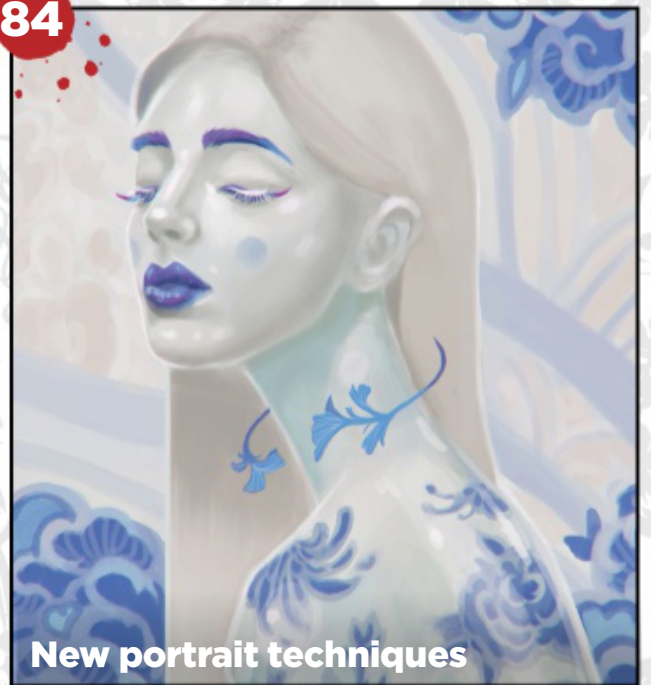
Make the time to explore new approaches and techniques in your personal work, with concept artist Jenn Ravenna.

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Paint vibrant portraits

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New portrait techniques

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The chaos of watercolours

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Build up contrast

Traditional Artist

100 Traditional art FXPosé

Explore this month's selection of the finest traditional art, sent in by you!

104 Workshop: Embrace the chaos of watercolours

Emily Hare paints dozing dragons using watercolour, a medium that results in no two paintings looking the same.

110 Core Skills: Drawing techniques

Timothy Von Rueden shows the importance of creating contrast in your art.

114 First Impressions: Marc Scheff

We talk to the US artist and educator.



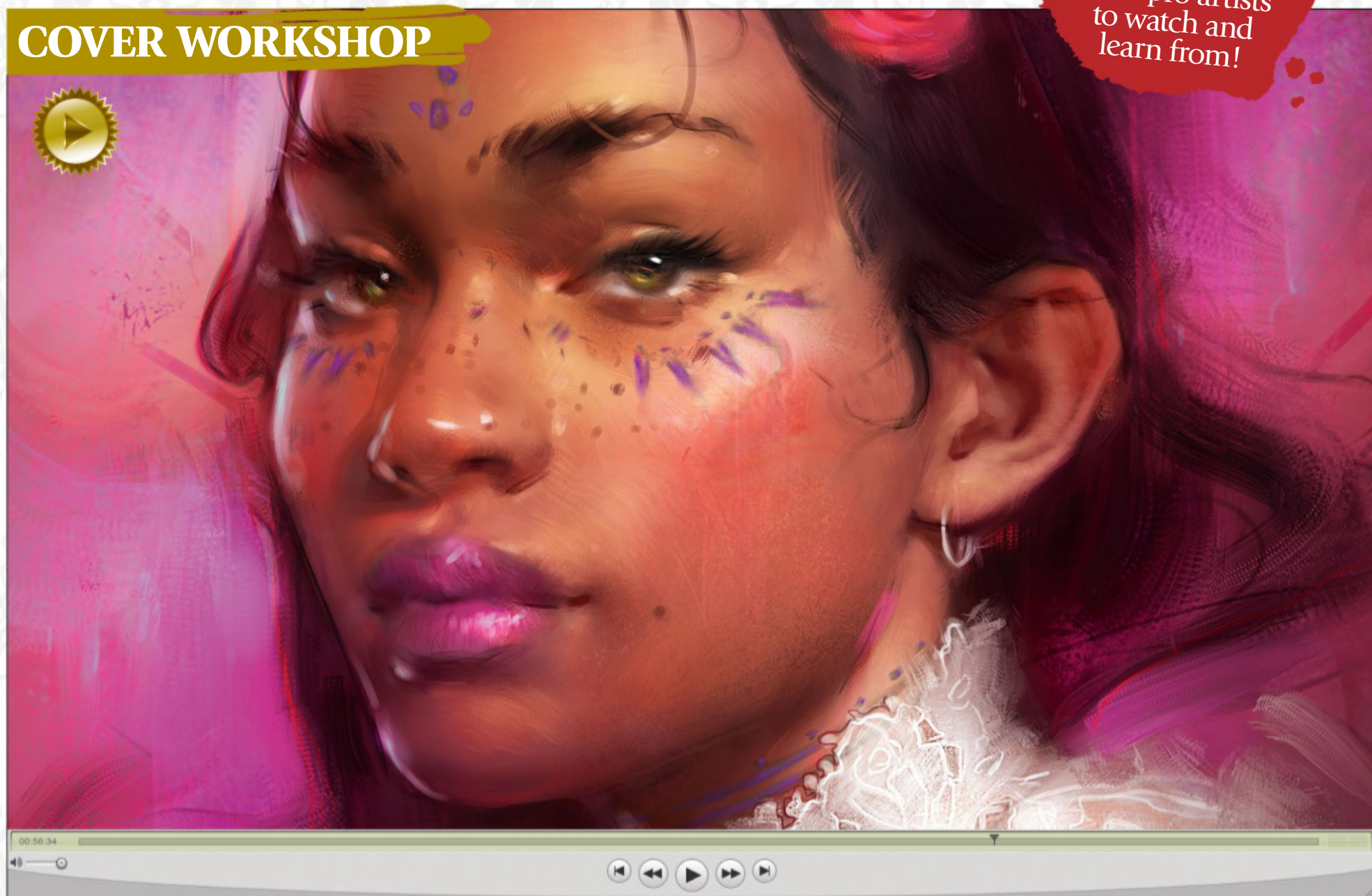
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Resources

Getting hold of this issue's videos and custom brushes is quick and easy. Just visit our dedicated web page at **<https://ifxm.ag/portrait180art>**

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of video tutorials
from pro artists
to watch and
learn from!

COVER WORKSHOP



GET YOUR RESOURCES

You're three steps away from
this issue's resource files...

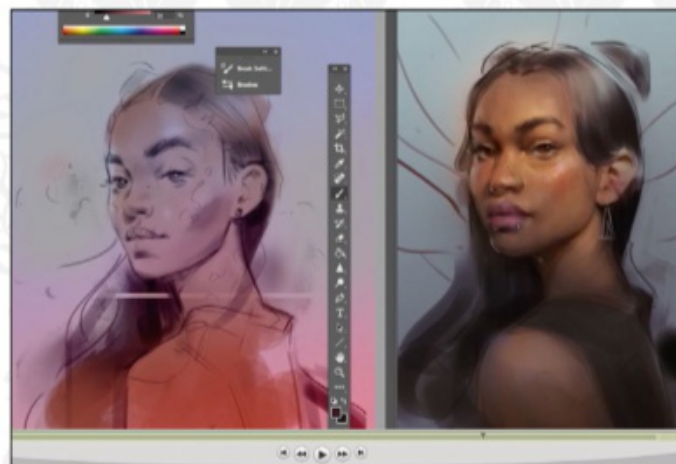
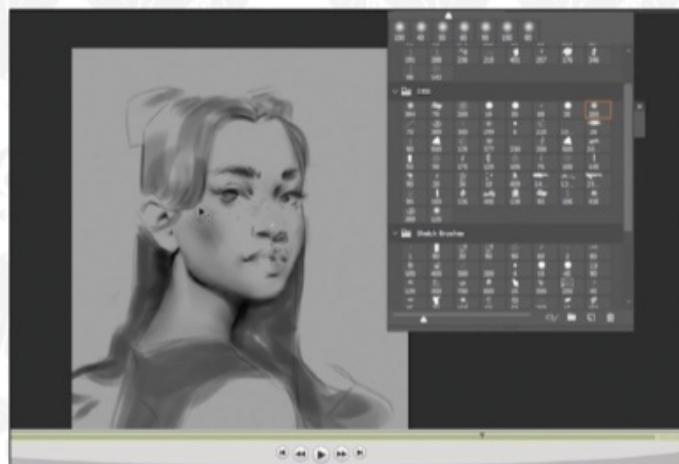
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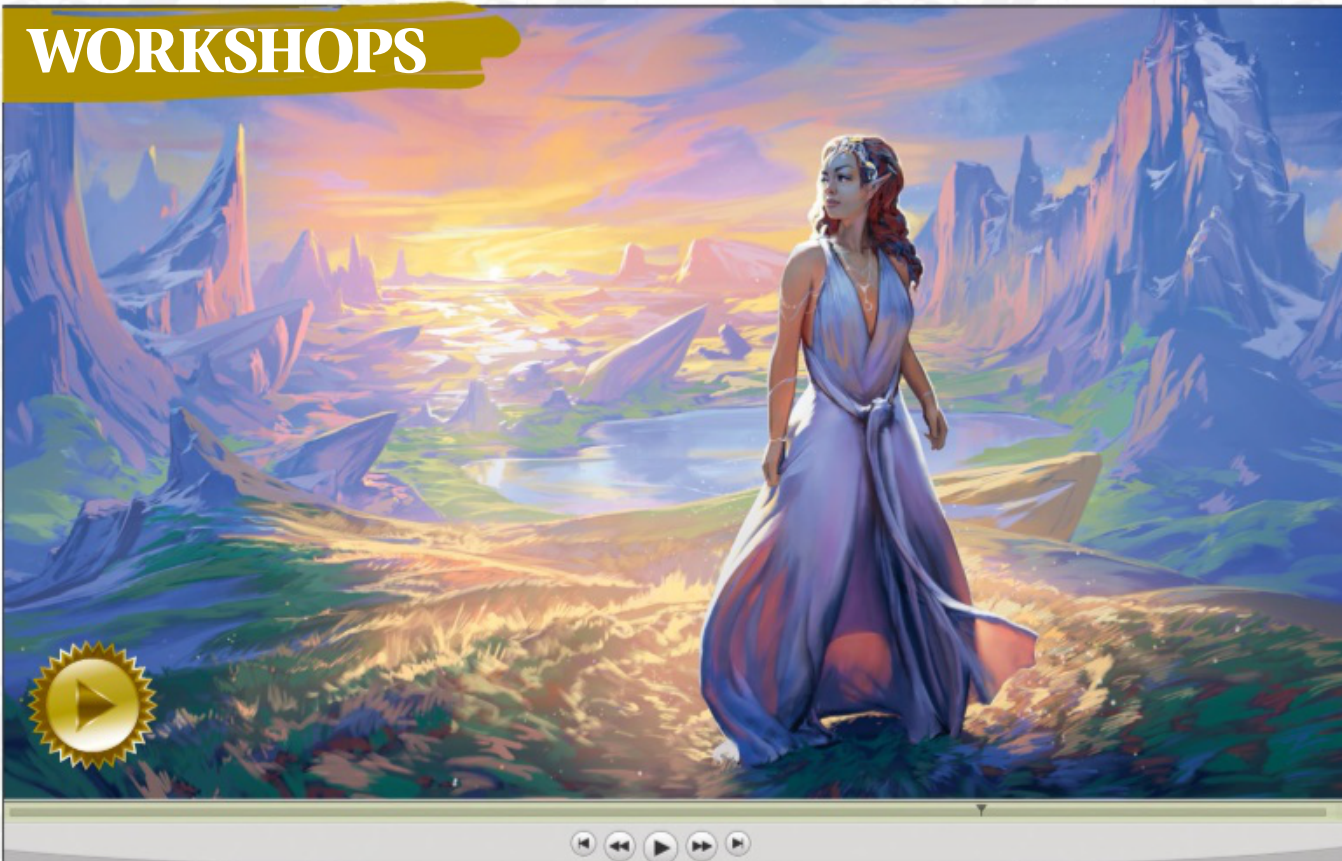
3 Download what you need...
Download the files or watch
them via a bespoke YouTube link.

Bring vibrant colours to your portraits

Watch Daniel Bolling Walsh make use of Photoshop's layer modes and custom brushes as he paints this captivating portrait piece for our cover. Turn to page 66 for his workshop.



WORKSHOPS



NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX

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Paint card art that instantly captures the viewer's attention

Illustrator Noah Bradley explains the principles of creating artwork for games like Magic: The Gathering, and stresses the importance of good reference. His workshop is on page 74.



Make full use of contrast

Timothy Von Rueden explains why contrast is crucial. Follow his workshop on page 110

60 REFERENCE PHOTOS



Fantasy reference photos

Use Noah Bradley's reference photos to ensure your art's grounded in reality.

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45 OVAL BRUSH

Daniel Bolling Walsh uses this brush to sketch out his ideas and for blocking in values.

SUPERDOT

Card artist Noah Bradley created this custom brush to help him quickly paint textures.

394 SOFT TEXTURED BRUSH

Daniel reveals this brush enables him to soften edges in his artworks while retaining texture.

FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



Tomas Oleksak

LOCATION: Slovakia **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.tomasoleksak.com

Tomas is a freelance concept artist and illustrator who's worked on several indie games, as well as creating character designs for an animated film.



1 SCARLET SPIDER

"When I was a little kid I didn't know a lot about Scarlet Spider, but I always liked his costume. Later on, when I discovered his story, I fell in love with this character."

2 CAPRICORN

"Artwork for a project exploring the signs of the zodiac. I imagined Capricorn as a huge, swamp-dwelling beast, and tried to give the piece an eerie feel."

3 GHOST RIDER

"A tribute to Marvel's anti-hero, and one of my favourite comic characters. I chose a portrait composition because I wanted to create interesting flames and render more details on the skull."

4 PUSTINA

"A personal piece that shows two heroes travelling through a wasteland. I found combining fantasy and post-apocalyptic elements very interesting."

3







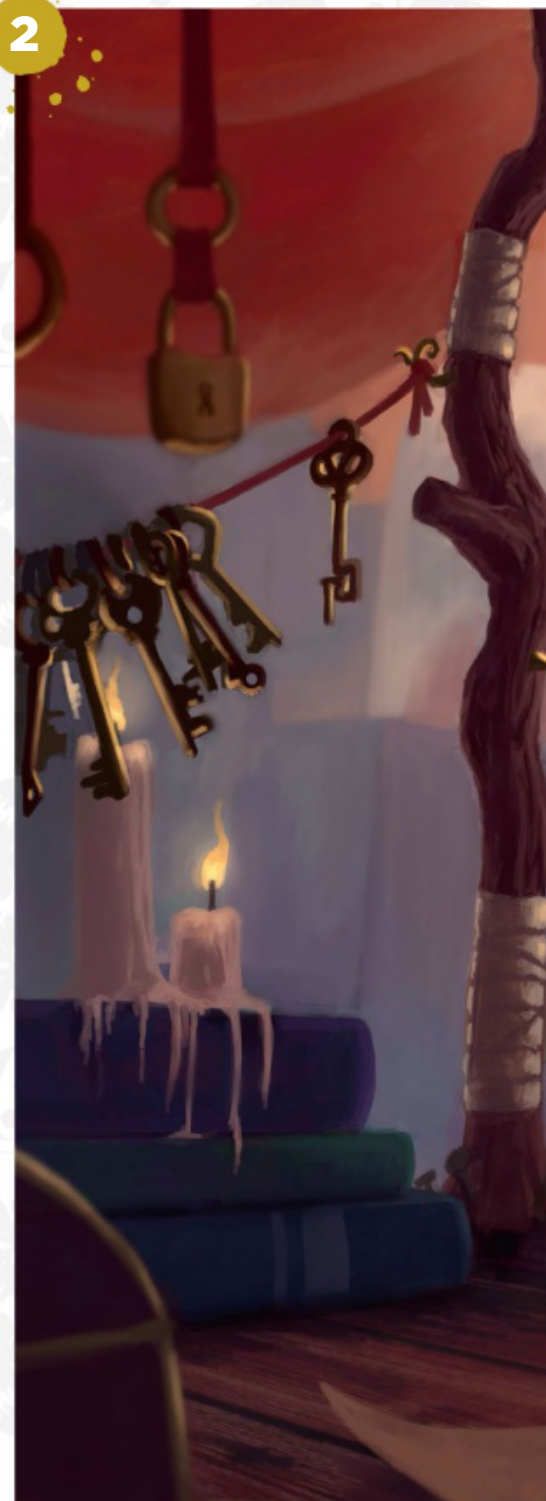
Barbara Lucas

LOCATION: Germany **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.sylthuria.com

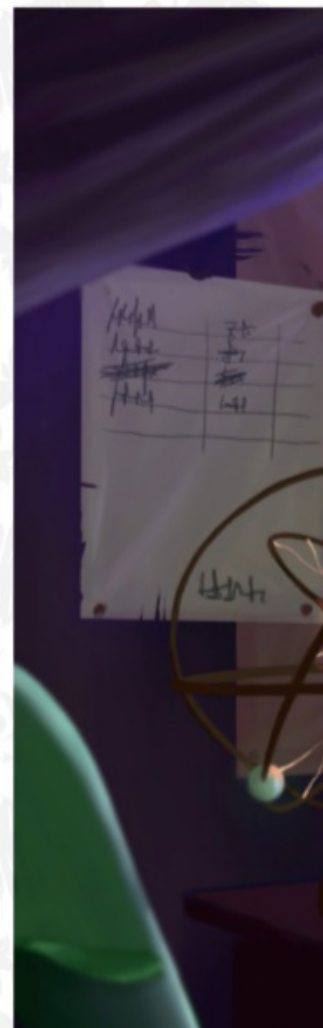
Dutch illustrator Barbara enjoys depicting mysterious characters. "They all have their own story in my mind, but I like to leave it to the viewer to make up a story for themselves," she says.



2



3





4

1 ARCANES MAGIC

"With this piece I wanted to explore how to paint magic. A lot of things that I didn't understand started to click when I was working on this image."

2 KEYMAKER'S STORE

"A personal design of mine. This character makes and sells keys. She can open every lock, or close them forever if you don't pay her enough!"

3 GATHERING KNOWLEDGE

"Here's my rebel leader casually gathering a magical scroll from an abandoned library. She's always on the lookout for magical artefacts, even if it means she has to sneak past guards."

4 THE SORCERER

"Before I even started with digital art I had always wanted to paint a sorcerer with a long beard, bent over an old book. The setting reflects tiny bits of who he is, but leaves a lot to speculate about."



Joseph C-Knight

LOCATION: England **MEDIA:** ZBrush, KeyShot Pro, VUE, Substance Painter, Houdini, Photoshop, 3ds Max, After Effects **WEB:** www.artstation.com/aramar

Joseph is a full-time freelance artist, who works both in 2D and 3D. “I believe in experimentation for the artistic vision to be realised,” he says. “To come up with the character concepts I use ZBrush to sculpt the forms.”

1 DRAGONS HAMMER

“An action scene depicting the force of dragons. Here, a warrior is using the power of the beast in battle.”



2 WEREWOLF

“This was sculpted in ZBrush and painted in Photoshop. The glowing effects were created with After Effects.”



3 THE SWORD IN THE STONE

“It’s the classic tale but with a more modern approach. The lighting and magic was created using After Effects.”

4 KING OF DRAGONS

“Abstract textures help to depict motion through the water. I had to balance them to work for the cold and warm colours.”



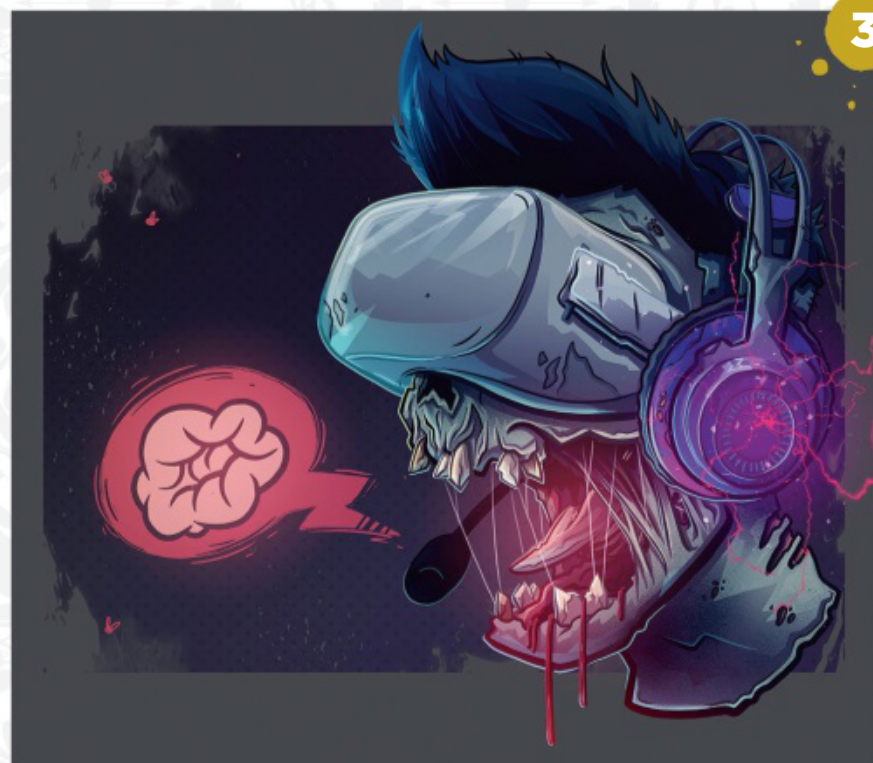




Rachel Alderson

LOCATION: England **MEDIA:** Procreate, Clip Studio Paint, Photoshop **WEB:** www.rachelalderson.co.uk

Rachel is a freelance digital illustrator and concept artist. She likes to create things that either make people laugh, or cause them to wonder what's going on in her brain.



1 GREEN SNAKE DRAGON

"I've always been inspired by animals, and it was the mouth of the green snake in particular that gave me the inspiration for this dragon design."

2 JUNKER SHARK

"Part of a personal project to raise money for shark charities. I wanted to explore what sharks might look like if the waste in our oceans caused them to mutate."

3 VR ZOMBIE

"I'm forever drawing zombies and am a huge gamer, so it was only right to create this VR gaming zombie for a new line of mouse pads."

4 SHARK BRUTES

"A personal piece on sea creature mutations. The rope and parachute were challenging, but I think they turned out well. I like how the colours work together."



Marcel Gröber

LOCATION: Germany **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Illustrator, Affinity Designer, After Effects **WEB:** www.marschel-arts.com

Marcel is a freelance illustrator, creating art for both video and tabletop games, publishing and historic events. “But I’m a storyteller by heart, creating my own stories and IPs about adventure and discovery,” he says.

1



1 A FLAME WITHIN

“A piece capturing my experience with depression and losing hope. No matter how lost you are, there always remains that little flame within; keeping you warm, keeping you company.”

2 HOW TO CATCH AN OCTOBEAR

“The octobear is a creature that’s half-bear and half-octopus. Each year since 2016 I’ve created a new painting and a little story about him for the month of October.”

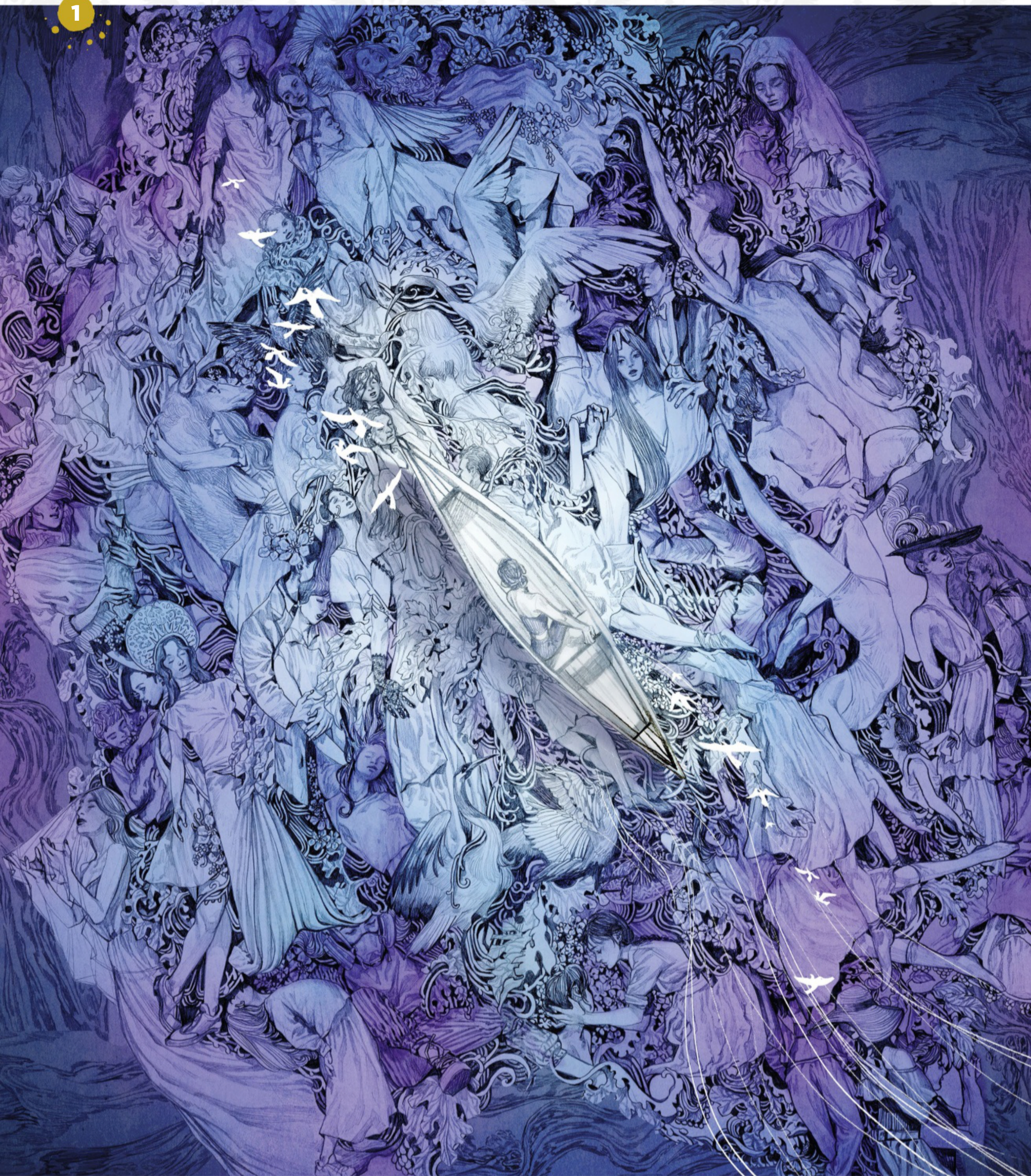
3 COLLECTING SPELL BOOKS

“I love to build the possibility for stories into my pieces. Where is she coming from, and where’s she going? What about those books – how did she get hold of them?”

2









Jen Yoon

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.jenyoonaart.com

Jen is a Korean illustrator based in New York. Her work is focused on line drawing that arouse deep, strong emotions, using textures to recreate the feeling of traditional paintings in her digital artwork.



1 INSPIRATIONS

"Artwork showing the inspirations that have shaped me into who I am today."

2 THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

"A modern interpretation, tackling subjects like family pressures, binge eating and multiple relationships."

3 GEMINI

One of zodiac signs series inspired by the sculptures at the Metropolitan Museum of Art."

4 HERITAGE

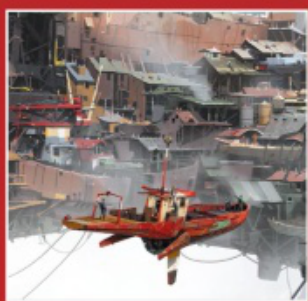
"I wanted to visualise the cultural heritage that's handed down to the next generation, from mother to daughter."

ARTIST NEWS, SOFTWARE & EVENTS ImagineNation

AT THE CORE OF THE DIGITAL ART COMMUNITY

"When I'm working on commission my contracts include specific arrangements for extra edits," says Annie Stegg.





GOING THE EXTRA MILE

Ian McQue's iconic floating boats form the basis of *Mileships*, a book project that's about to be Kickstarted into life, for publication next year. Exciting! **Page 29**



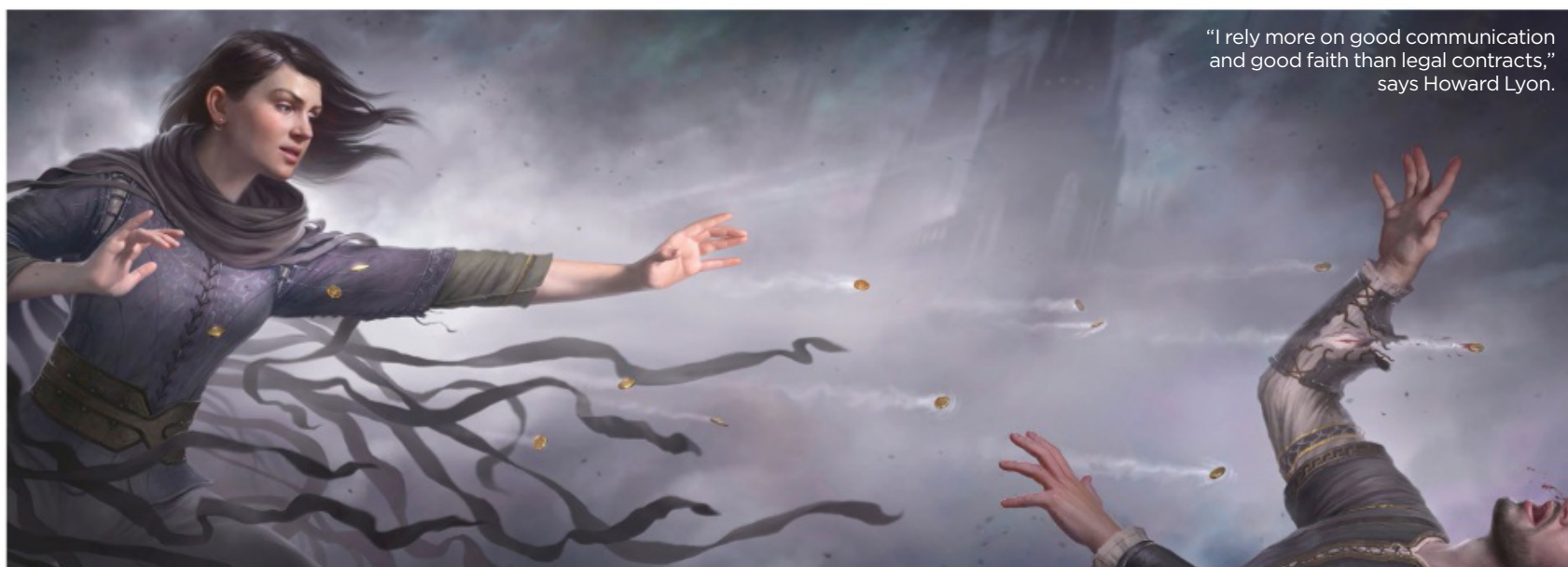
PRACTICAL MAGIC

Step into Blizzard artist Kymba LeCrone's expansive workspace, where she designs, sculpts and paints the characters that appear in her stories. **Page 30**



GET IN TOUCH WITH US!

Whether something in the magazine has made you go "Wow!" "Hmmm...", we want to hear from you. Your letters and feedback make our day! **Page 37**



"I rely more on good communication and good faith than legal contracts," says Howard Lyon.

The do's and don'ts of taking commissions

Job offer How do you take on a commission without getting your fingers burned? Leading illustrators share their real-life experiences and advice with **Tom May**

Working on a commission for a client can be a tricky matter. However talented you are artistically, a client is also a person, with all the flaws and foibles we humans share. So you need to tread carefully.

The first dilemma is how much to charge. That's not always easy, even



for a seasoned professional like US-based illustrator **Annie Stegg**. "Calculating fees is always very difficult," she says.

on a day rate, but it depends how big the project and client are. I might charge less for a small music band project, for example: it really depends on the context."

TIME IS MONEY

Rates aren't always straightforward,



either, for **Kelsey Beckett**, a freelance illustrator and fine artist based in Michigan, US. "My fees are usually calculated based



"I prefer a loose brief, but sometimes a precise one helps you work accurately," says Olivier Bonhomme.

“If a client has a complicated vision, such as multiple characters or detailed environment, the price will increase”

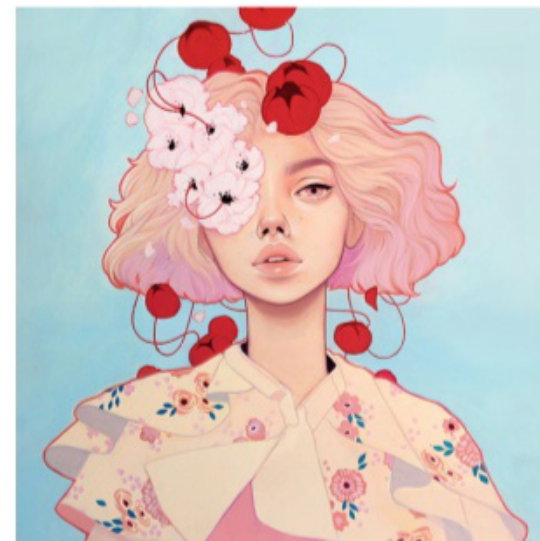
"While I do go by industry standards, I tend to adjust my fee based on how long I think it will take me to complete an image. If there are high-cost materials, that's also factored in. It's about striking a balance."



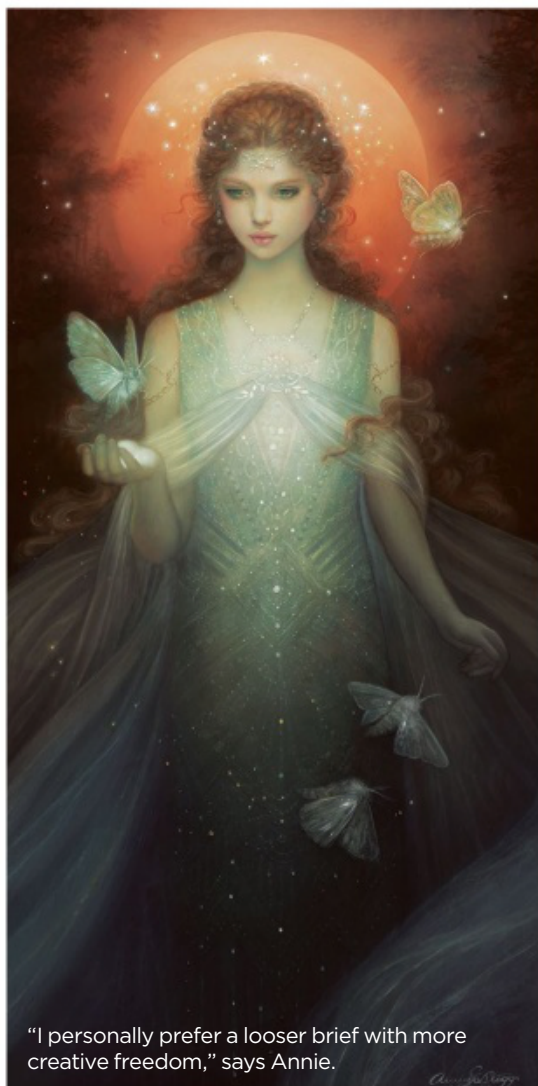
Others take a similar approach. French illustrator and art editor **Olivier Bonhomme** says, "I usually calculate my fee

on size, content and medium," she explains. "But sometimes if a client has a vision that is complicated, such as multiple characters, a detailed background or narrative, the price will increase."

Estimating the time that you're going to spend on a project is challenging, because you also have to take potential revision requests into account. To avoid too many of



Kelsey Beckett: "Clear dialogue with clients means you don't have to double back and fix things later."



"I personally prefer a looser brief with more creative freedom," says Annie.

➡➡ those, good communication is vital, believes Kelsey.

"It's important to be clear from the start," she says. "Let them know about additional fees for revisions, the time it will take to complete a project, and the type of information you need from them." She also recommends writing a contract that outlines exactly how you handle and charge for edits. "You want to make sure that you and your client are on the same page and both feel secure right out of the gate, and a contract is a very easy way to achieve this," Kelsey explains.

As with any relationship, the artist-client is one that should ideally improve and mature over time. Conversely, when it comes to new

"When clients give me a loose brief, I still keep them updated via ideas, sketches and progress photos," says Kelsey.



"Managing your production time is the best way to enhance your daily creativity," says Olivier.

“When I work with a new client, I cross my fingers with the first job, and hope we share the same vision”



clients, it's worth putting a bit of extra effort, says **Howard Lyon**, a fine artist and illustrator based in Utah, US.

"When I work with a new client, I always cross my fingers with the first job, and hope we share the same vision," he says. "I'll do extra sketches and make them a little tighter, so there are plenty of clear options for the illustration. That eliminates wasting time on miscommunication."

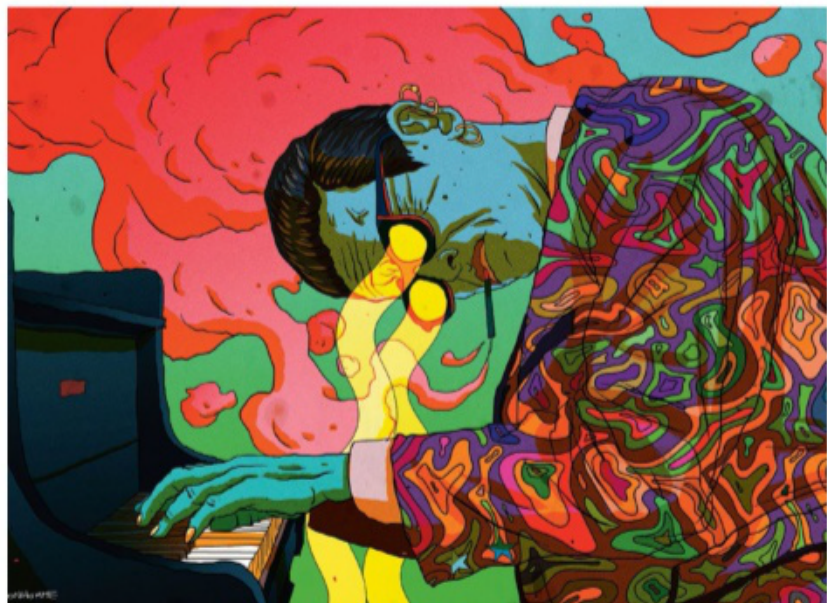
WHEN THINGS GO SOUTH

Sometimes, however, relationship breakdown is inevitable, perhaps because the client is acting in bad

faith, or because they don't know what they want. "There are scammers out there, and there are also people commissioning artists who don't understand the industry," says Annie.

"Having a contract is also a great way of avoiding scams before they can do any damage to you," says Kelsey. "One piece of advice that I feel isn't discussed enough is to keep your [courier] tracking numbers, which will let you know if a physical painting or drawing has made it to the client."

But whether we're talking about dishonest people or incompetent ones, how do you spot potential bad clients before taking them on? Annie lists some red flags: "Being unwilling to ➡➡





"I'm fortunate to have avoided troublesome clients, but I've known other artists who haven't been paid," reveals Howard.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

HOWARD LYON

The fine artist outlines his approach to commissions

How do you approach calculating your fees?

I almost always base it around how much time I think I'll spend, and then multiply that by an hourly rate. I determine the hourly rate by setting how much money I need to earn in a year and dividing it by 2,000. That represents 40 hours of work a week, for 50 weeks.

As a simple example, if I said that I was going to target 100K a year then my hourly rate would be \$50 an hour. In reality, of course, I don't always have 40 hours a week of work from clients. Sometimes it's more, sometimes it's less.

How important is it for the brief to be specific?

I prefer to receive a looser description in the brief and then ask specific questions. I love the freedom that it provides and if your communication is good with the art director, you can still be sure to provide the client with exactly what they need.

What advice would you offer an artist who's about to accept their first commission?

Don't be afraid to ask lots of questions. I've never had an art director become upset because I asked too many questions. After that, do lots of sketches and submit the best ones. Maybe six or seven ideas that are strong. That might mean doing 20 to get to that point.

Once you establish a working relationship, you might reduce that to just one or two strong ideas in the future. But for the first few jobs, I recommend that you go overboard with ideas and ask lots of questions!



Born in Arizona and now living in Utah, Howard is an award-winning fine artist and illustrator.

www.howardlyon.com

Howard says that, "Most of my clients I've known for years, so we both have a good understanding of expectations."



"The people who commission you deserve the same respect you'd offer anyone else in your life," says Kelsey.



Annie advises that artists should "see every commission as a chance to not only make some money, but to also improve your skills."





"With all small projects, get a contract that gives you the best reprint right," says Rebecca Guay.

➡➡ pay a portion of the overall fee in advance. Being unwilling to pay standard rates. Having extremely specific art direction, where you can tell there will be a million revisions each step of the way. Also, if they tell you they had to fire their previous artist, it likely means the artist fired them."

Kelsey adds her own suggestions to the list. "If someone is short with you, leaves you feeling anxious, or isn't cooperative. If you offer someone your contract and they decline to sign. If they refuse to use the payment system you're comfortable with, opting for a cheque or money order." She adds that it's helpful to have a network of artists who can alert you to fraudulent clients they've had in the past.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Remember, too, to examine the small print when it comes to rights. "Generally with large companies, you want to maintain as many rights as you can for reprint and reuse," advises



Magic: The Gathering artist **Rebecca Guay**. "Of course, if it's your first job with them, or you're new, you generally have to take what they are offering, then negotiate a better deal later."

Meanwhile, when it comes to payment, Rebecca says, "Get 20 per cent after sketches are done, 20 per cent after a low-res image is approved, then the balance prior to delivery of the high-res images, or the paintings or drawings if they're traditional, plus a set rate per hour on all edits."



Olivier reveals that he doesn't restrict the number of edits in advance, but usually just works until the client is satisfied.

And the best way to negotiate all of this effectively? "Always have your walking shoes on," Rebecca says. "If you have the power to walk away from anything, you'll negotiate better. If you're completely new, you don't own walking shoes yet but you will, and when you do, use them."

“If you have the power to walk away from anything, you'll negotiate better”

Yet while keeping a cool business head is vital when you accept a commission, don't lose sight of what led you to become an artist in the first place. "I'd say the most important thing is to work with sincerity, even on a small project," says Olivier. "Maintaining passion and being devoted to the work is something that clients can feel, so it really helps things go smoothly. Keep a clear mind, don't ask for cheap breaking-market fees, but be realistic. And last but not least, have fun doing it."

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Entire settlements defy gravity as Ian McQue's fantasy milieu is explored in *Mileships*.

Journey to the floating world of Ian McQue

Blue-sky thinking Artist Ian McQue and video games studio head Jim Rossignol unveil their plans for *Mileships*, a new fantasy book that's set to go on sale next year



Having previously collaborated on the first-person shooter *The Signal* from Tölva, concept artist **Ian McQue** and game developer **Jim Rossignol**, of **Big Robot Ltd**, are teaming up again to create *Mileships*, a 164-page illustrated fantasy book.

Since *Tölva*, the pair have been knocking around ideas about how to flesh out Ian's visual universe, in which

huge, rusty vessels drift high in the atmosphere, navigating around islands and mountains that float up there with them. "It's going to be a big, bold, colourful, widescreen adventure, essentially hopeful in its outlook, not dystopian in tone," explains Ian. "There'll be blue skies and tumbling white clouds as a backdrop to the teeming rusty bricolage of flying boats and floating shipyards people who know my work

While there's no single storyline in *Mileships*, the world's history and its peoples will gradually be revealed.

might be familiar with. It's also a chance to populate this world with a cast of heroic airfarers and crusty villains alongside the everyday blue-collar folk who make this world work."

While Ian paints his vistas, **Jim** is writing about the stories, cultures, characters and physics of the *Mileships* world. "It explores the vast, skybound ships themselves as well as



smaller vessels, fabulous locations and the weightless geology and ecology in which they serve," says the writer.

Some of the details may change as the project progresses, but a £35 Kickstarter package is being planned for next year, with the potential for lavish bindings, exclusive prints and more. Fans are already calling for a game based on *Mileships*, to which Jim responds: "Let's just say that this book is the first step in a much broader plan..."

Prepare yourself for *Mileships* by exploring Ian's art and previous books at www.ianmcque.bigcartel.com.





I have a set of wicker shelves in my Art and Writing Room that I've owned since my youth. They contain Zuni fetish stones, feathers, wood carvings and other meaningful mementos. It also serves as a reminder to me that sometimes it's important to slow down, rather than simply push forward and burn the candle at both ends.

I've been coaxing myself to use a proper camera to photograph my work. To help in this quest, I use one of two collapsible lightboxes. I keep my camera kit, props, lights and tripod nearby so I have no excuse not to take the time to document my work.

In 2017, I suffered a major injury that left me unable to walk unassisted for over a year, which led to multiple corrective surgeries and regular pain. The screws and plate in this jar were some of the items that were removed from my leg, foot and ankle, and remind me of how far I've come, and all that I still want to accomplish.

Kymba LeCrone

Keeping busy From sculpture to digital art, woodwork to traditional media, this artist and author has a lot of creative irons in the fire

I picked up this antique drafting table over 20 years ago from a yard sale. I couldn't come close to being able to afford it, but the seller took pity on me and sold it to me for hardly anything, asking only that I use it in good health. I've never forgotten his kindness, and have attempted to pay it forward as well.



Stepping into any of my creative spaces on any given morning, the first thing that would likely strike you is that they sing with untapped potential.

Over the years I've come to realise that how well I can focus on a creative task often depends on how I feel when I first enter that sacred space. So I make it a point to ensure that my work

areas are tidy, welcoming and well-lit, which makes it easy for me to get going with any project on my slate, no matter how big or small.

My range of work spans sculpture, woodworking, real media and digital painting, sketching, moulding and casting, jewellery making, writing and more. With this diverse set of interests, comes the need to figure out ever-more creative ways to organise my

supplies and tools of the trade so that they have a cosy home-base, but are easy to access when I need them.

My Art and Writing Room is the first of three primary work spaces I use. It has a good amount of storage as well as three large, flat workspaces that can suit any flavour of painting, sculpture, photography or other tasks that require a refined eye, and potentially a minimum of mess. ➡➡

Artist news, software & events

All of my workspaces are Alexa-enabled, so I can listen to music, watch TV, adjust lighting, set timers, or even turn on reference photos or inspiring slideshows using just my voice! This is especially helpful if your hands are otherwise occupied with any manner of chemicals or tools.

I've had the immense pleasure of commissioning and receiving art from talented friends surrounding my story characters and their world, and having such personal art prominently on display fuels my creative muses, and keeps me focused on the task at hand.



Although I work in the game industry and enjoy gaming, I've found it's helpful for me to minimise distractions while I write, so I actually work on my story on a simple laptop that can only handle Scrivener and some light web browsing.



Steinir is a dragon that I sculpted as a gift for a dear friend, and he's a creature of my own creation, and thus isn't intended to be fan art or based on any existing dragon designs out there. As such, sculpting him was quite a freeing experience! I had a blast trying new things and infusing a fresh personality into him. It makes me want to sculpt more scaly creatures!

Me in my Art and Writing Room with a little Mandala Raven raw casting.



ImagineNation Artist in Residence

I picked up this sign years ago, and it's become a personal mantra. Of course, proper nutrition and sleeping habits are key, so the sign can serve as a reminder for me to step inside and get a drink or a quick snack, or simply take a break.

Safety first! I keep a variety of different respirators, gloves, safety goggles and visors in my workshop. They're stored in cases to not only reduce any potential for cross-contamination, but to also keep out any curious creepy crawlies.



This area acts as a spot for me to pour silicones and resins as well as an intermediary staging ground in my workshop. In this case, these particular resin castings are awaiting being painted, detailed and sealed.



I was never interested in glitter as a child, but I've found a new appreciation for it as an adult, and use carefully organised glitter and mica powder inclusions in my resin castings.



I only got into sculpting in the past 10 years or so. Since then I've started creating handmade moulds and painted casts of my work. It's been a wonderful way to experiment with all sorts of colours and finishes.

Artist news, software & events

I keep a lot of my moulding and casting supplies tucked away in clear acrylic bins that I can then take down and use when I need them. Each available size is labelled so I can pick out the best one for the job (with the least waste!).

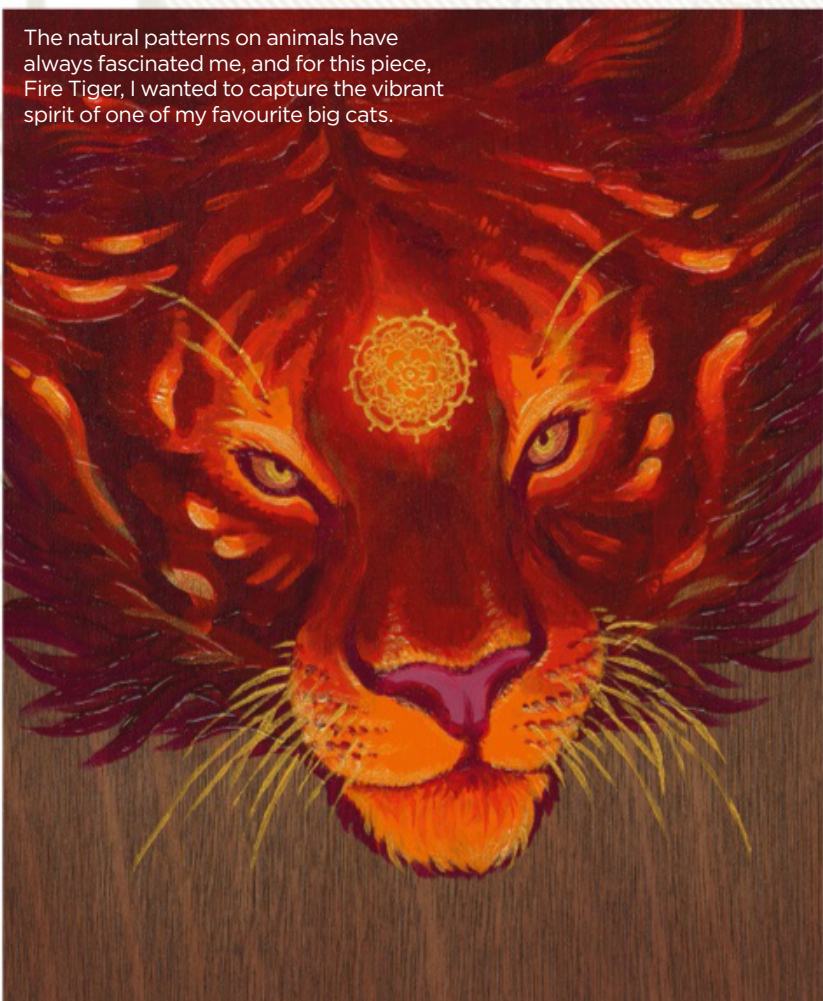
My high-speed polishing cabinet enables me to quickly sand and polish whatever I might be working on, without having to stop to pull out my Dremels. In general, all of the tools I use regularly remain readily available, such as my belt sander, band saw and drills, whereas the tools that I only use for specific tasks are stowed away.



This anti-fatigue foam flooring is one of the best investments I've made. It makes toiling in the workshop much easier on my legs and back. I installed the flooring myself when I couldn't stand unassisted. I laid on the ground, hand-cut each piece and installed them one-by-one.

I have created many fantasy-inspired animals of late, including a lacework hummingbird saddled with a steadfast kitty companion that was crafted as a memorial sculpture for a sweet kitty that my mother lost to a fatal disease.

The natural patterns on animals have always fascinated me, and for this piece, Fire Tiger, I wanted to capture the vibrant spirit of one of my favourite big cats.



What started as an inside joke has grown into a pack of "Workshop Raptors" that guard my space and keep me company for silly photo-ops. Since I try to keep my horizontal spaces uncluttered, having dinosaurs livening up the walls has been fun, and adds a unique touch to my studio.

ImagineNation Artist in Residence

Emma Lazauski painted this piece featuring three characters from my story. You'll meet one of them in my first book, *The Wolf and the Clockwork Hummingbird*. Because this scene occurs later in the series, it reminds me where these three characters are headed.

Years ago, I collected a barkless branch and fashioned it into makeshift display. I've since taken to hanging little treasures from it, from jewellery bits to feathers, claws, carvings, leaves and more. It's a lively display of my adventures and diverse natural interests.

I've commissioned and purchased art from artists around the world, and I have some of them on display on my desk. I love seeing what incredible creativity there is from other makers out there.

I have a Daruma Doll on my desk. The idea is that you fill in the pupil of the left eye while concentrating on your goal or wish, and that you fill in the pupil of the right eye when that goal or wish is eventually realised.



While I tend to use my Wacom tablet and Nostromo for the bulk of my digital work, I've been using my iPad for on-the-go sketching a lot more recently. It's a wonderful device that's enabled me to be more 'spur-of-the moment' in my sketching.

My oversized scanner and printer means I'm able to scan large items like my wood panel and watercolour paintings, and create accurate reproductions. Having them next to my workstation is ideal, as I can use the daylight to accurately gauge the resulting colours.

This area acts as the first staging grounds for printing and shipping out orders, so I have a variety of paper, ink and shipping labels on-hand, as well as a scale for weighing packages.

➡ Supplies and reference books are stowed neatly in drawers and on shelves so that they can be retrieved the moment they're needed, and put back once they've served their purpose. This is also the room I come to when I'm trying to hone my focus and work on my personal writing. In that spirit, I decorated the room with many pieces of art inspired from my characters, their stories, and their world. It's a cosy space that's bursting with inspiration.

My workshop is my second major workspace. If it's work that requires power tools, or a project that gives off dust or fumes, this is where the magic

happens. My shop has all manner of tools, and each task calls for an optimal set-up and appropriate safety measures that I'm forever in the process of fine-tuning. For instance, chemicals are relegated to the stainless steel table, cutting happens on the cutting mats, and if something needs assembly or a vice, the workbench is at-the-ready to assist. Like my Art and Writing Room, my

“Supplies and reference books are stowed neatly in drawers and on shelves”

supplies are tucked away, but remain at the ready so that I can use each of the flat, horizontal spaces to their fullest potential.

BEING SOCIABLE

My third major workspace is my digital workstation. This is where I do the bulk of my digital art as well as scanning, printing, photo-retouching, mailing and any general business needs. It's located adjacent to my fiancé's own computer desk, which makes it great when I'm craving social company during my creative quests, or simply want to catch up on a bit of gaming.

This unique table has four cubbies below the table, and four above. I've stored an array of reference books in the cubbies along the floor, and added some extra ones towards the ceiling that serve as drying racks. The middle sections house trays containing tools of the trade, and some reference models and trinkets.



Back in 2011 my dear friend Cindy Reep created a high-resolution faux stained glass digital painting featuring two of my story's characters. In the months thereafter, I made a physical faux stained glass piece out of it, featuring wiring, woodworking, acrylic, glass and more. It's a massive 49x25x5.25-inches, and is incredibly inspiring and comforting to me.



Having separate creative spaces has been fantastic, and it's enabled me to be more productive than I would have been otherwise. While I know there's an old trope about artists relishing chaos, I can definitely tell you that for me, taking a more intentional, organised approach has made all the difference in the world.

By day, Kymba is a media artist on Blizzard Entertainment's Cinematics team. By night, she creates a range of multimedia art and sculpture, and is working on the first novel in her own book series, entitled *The Wolf and the Clockwork Hummingbird*. You can see more of her art and writing at www.kimberlylecrone.com.



Above is a work-in-progress sculpture of one of my story characters, the werewolf enchantress, Sashah. I've since begun painting her (left) and when she's eventually finished the character will be stepping over a river while casting a magic spell that looks like a dragon! I can't wait for readers to learn more about her and her world.

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Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



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Passing on the knowledge

After longing for an iPad Pro with Apple Pencil for years, I recently took advantage of the fact that early adopters who have bought the latest model then go on to sell their old tablet. I managed to pick up a bargain 2017 version with all the trimmings that was selling on eBay.

I loved doing art on my iPad, even when I was finger painting, but using Apple Pencil with Procreate on the larger iPad Pro has been transformative. I can split the screen to have art books and magazines like ImagineFX open on one side and Procreate open on the other, so I can practise and improve my techniques. I hope that the barrier to entry continues to come down so others can also discover the joy of making digital art.

I've started to teach art to my young daughter with it: slowly explaining about layers and so on. While we will always still doodle and sketch with paper, pens and pencils, I've noticed that the freedom to correct and undo mistakes when working digitally is enabling her to be bolder and more experimental in her art. She's less fearful of messing up pictures than she has been with traditional media.

I've sent you an example of a painting, I did on iPad Air2 with my finger at 'Screen size' (before I got the new kit). It's the kind of piece I'd like to go back to in order to take it to 'the next level'.

Jonathan, via email

Claire replies Your daughter is lucky to have you as a teacher! The iPad really has revolutionised our options of when and how we can create digital art.



Reader Jonathan is keen to revisit this older image, now that he has an iPad Pro to paint on.



DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE? Don't worry – you can get hold of it at <https://ifxm.ag/new179issue>

Fantasy maps

Thank you for the article featuring the alternatives to Photoshop. I'm still new to digital art and this article has been a great help.

Recently, my love of role-playing games has inspired me to draw fantasy maps and I was wondering if this aspect of artistic creativity had ever come up as a possible topic for an article. Personally, I prefer to work with pencil on paper initially, then I ink it out in colour.

Alannah-Mae Dawson, via email

Claire replies Alannah-Mae, a proposed workshop or feature on fantasy maps for role-playing games? I'm in – it sounds like a fantastic thing for us to cover.

Clip Studio Paint is great!

In your article on Photoshop Alternatives, I think your writer really undersold the value of Clip Studio Paint (issue 176, page 27). I've used it and its predecessor Manga Studio 5 for years; while the software is technically marketed for manga/comic creation, to focus on that aspect really sells it short.

Clip Studio Paint has the full suite for layers, colours and mixing tools/brushes that any digital artist could hope for, and all the image-creation tools are available in the affordable Pro version.

The more expensive EX version enables you to set up multiple page project files. This is useful for actual comic creation, but your readers would be ill-served to come away with the opinion that Clip Studio Paint is basically a line-art tool. It's much more than that. And for artists working on single images the Pro Version is more than sufficient.

Even a cursory online search for images created in Clip Studio Paint should whet your readers' appetite for more. Certainly, anyone looking for an affordable alternative to Photoshop that you can own versus a subscription product should consider the program.

By the way, thank you! I still love your work and never miss an issue. The arrival of the new issue of ImagineFX is still one of the highlights of my month.

Tom, via email

Claire replies Tom, thank you for your outline of how Clip Studio Paint works for you. It's a preference thing isn't it? Lots of artists stick to Photoshop because it's what they know. Yet with encouragement from other artists like yourself, it might be the push an artist needs to try a new program.



New works that have grabbed our attention



Johanna Tarkela
[@lhuin](https://www.instagram.com/lhuin)

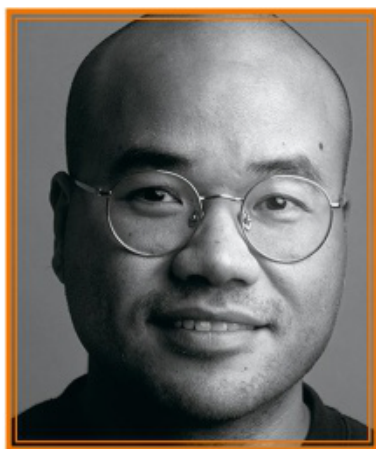


Luis Peres
[@icreateworlds_](https://www.instagram.com/icreateworlds_)
illustration



Irnes Husak
[@tropexart](https://www.instagram.com/tropexart)

If you've created art that you want us to shout about simply tag us on Twitter or Instagram, and use the hashtag #imaginefx



ARTIST PORTFOLIO

ANDREW HEM

Gang signs and agriculture: the Cambodian-American artist tells **Gary Evans** how his art was shaped by growing up between two very different cultures...

Andrew Hem's first story is about growing up in the Los Angeles area in the late 80s and early 90s. Andrew copied the graffiti he saw on walls around his neighbourhood in Culver City. He thought one font in particular – big, blocky letters – looked really cool. So cool, in fact, that he once handed in homework in a schoolbook covered with his own replica of the font. He was 11. His teacher called him to the front of class. "Andrew," the teacher said, "when did you become a gangster?" Andrew didn't know his favourite graffiti belonged to a notorious, murderous gang called the Culver City 13.

His second story is about how everybody in Cambodia paints the same way. Take, for example, paintings at Angkor Wat, one of the largest religious monuments in the world. They all look like they were done by one person, even though that would have been impossible. His parents are Cambodian – his father's an artist – but Andrew didn't learn to paint

Artist PROFILE

Andrew Hem

LOCATION: US

FAVOURITE ARTISTS: Adrian Ghenie, Anselm Kiefer, James Jean, Barry McGee, OSGEMEOS

MEDIA USED: Watercolours, gouache, oil and acrylic

WEB: www.andrewhem.com



landscapes the traditional Cambodian way. He learned by studying Edgar Alwin Payne's paintings of the American West. During a recent visit to Cambodia, he was painting outdoors in a style that was completely unfamiliar to the locals. He overheard people talking behind his back: "What kind of tree is that?"

His third story is about the Khmer Rouge. The regime ruled Cambodia for just four years, but was responsible for one of the worst mass killings of the 20th century, murdering around

SONIA

"Inspired by a work trip I took to Bogota, Colombia. My assistant at the time was helping me paint a wall. I'm obsessed with artists working in their studio so I created a place and imagined what her work would look like."

25 per cent of the country's population. Andrew's parents fled and eventually settled in California in 1982. But Andrew was born in 1981, neither in Cambodia nor in America, but in Thailand.

These stories suggest Andrew Hem is a great raconteur. He's not quite that chatty. He responds to most questions with short answers. But when he does elaborate, when he does bring certain details into focus, his stories are a bit like his art. The Cambodian-American often paints lonely looking figures, or figures looking lonely even while part of a group.

However, his work isn't necessarily dark or depressing. "A snapshot of a dream," one critic called his work.

There are lots of colours. There's a ➡

“I was such an awkward kid growing up – I didn't have any friends really...” ➡



FALL BACK

"This was one of the only pieces I created that came from a drawing. The only difference that I notice is that I don't stare at the canvas for hours trying to figure out what to do next."



➤ hint of anime about the shape of his stylised figures. There are suggestions of deeper connections beneath surface isolation. There's even the odd beaming smile. Andrew's stories are a bit like his art because both make you do some of the work.

A FATHER'S INFLUENCE

Andrew grew up seeing his dad's paintings all around the house. His dad taught art in Thailand and would draw and paint constantly. He even drew on Andrew's library books, which

got his son into trouble. The message was clear: draw as much as you can, whenever and wherever you can. Many of these pieces depicted the landscapes of rural Cambodia. Andrew had not been there yet, but he was always attracted to these images because his dad painted them over and over again.

Andrew found his own thing: graffiti. He started when he was very young, drawing on his schoolbooks, and by high school he was going out with an older friend to spray-paint walls at 2am. This friend was 20 and

BRING HOME THE BACON

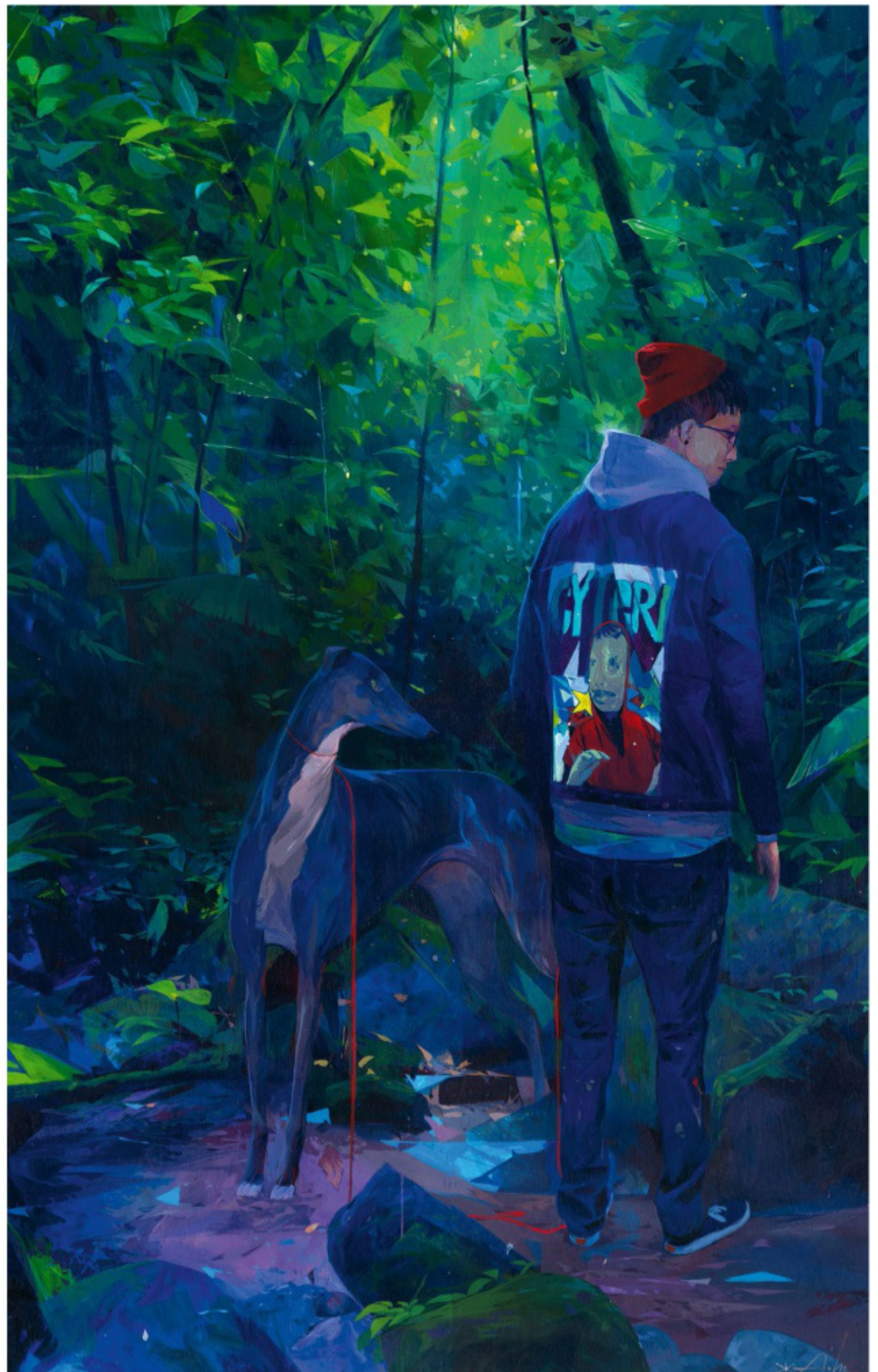
"The first piece in my studio series, which was inspired by the master, Francis Bacon's studio. I saw how chaotic his studio was and fell in love with it."

had a car. Andrew was 14. His mother had concerns, but she was happy he was getting out and "being social." School was tough after being out all night. But Andrew loved that he had this secret life.

"I was such an awkward kid growing up, I didn't have any friends really. I was into comics, and, in a strange kind of way, this was my superhero identity. Nobody at school knew. That made me feel somewhat special.

"Graffiti made my transition to figure-drawing and painting easy. Graffiti is all cylinders and squares. The human anatomy, when you break it down, is all cylinders and squares. Because I spent nine years doing graffiti, I was comfortable making the move to drawing anatomy." ➤

“Graffiti made my transition to figure-drawing and painting easy. Graffiti is all cylinders and squares”



ALL GROWN UP

"A real personal piece for me, created during a vulnerable state of a break-up. We got a dog from a shelter together. I imagined what he would look like all grown up."

WHY START WITH THE BRIDGE

"An angry state of mind after the break-up. Sometimes it's hard to paint in a time of pain, but, strangely enough, this was therapeutic for me."

Interview



PRISTINE

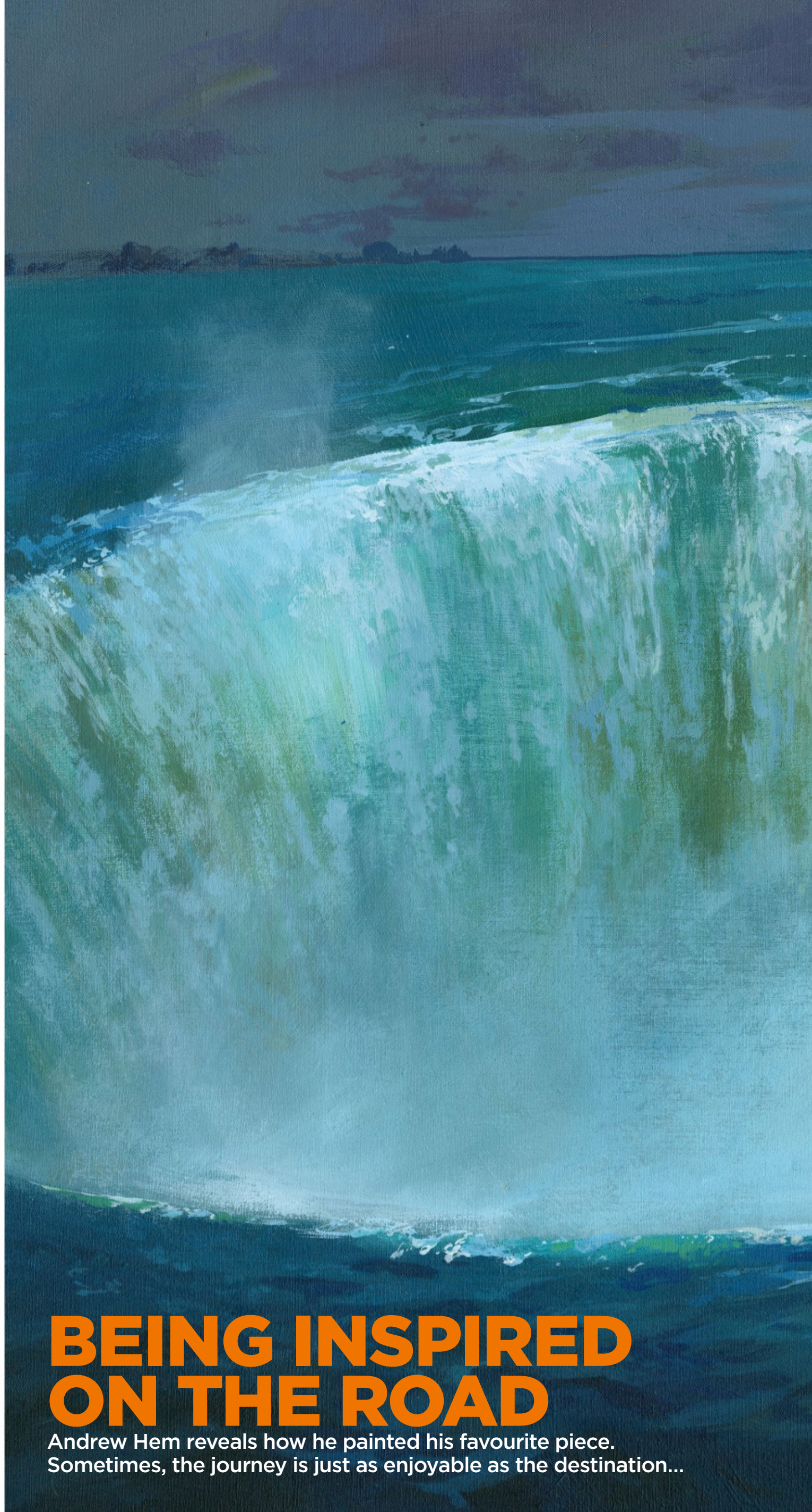
"Pristine is my fiancé. We're getting married soon: her name is Christine and I picture her as Pristine."

➡➡ Graffiti taught him the fundamentals, but Andrew realised it wasn't something he wanted to do long term after spending four days in county jail for spraying art on an abandoned building in San Francisco. It was a "wake-up call." He enrolled at the Art Center College of Art and Design in Pasadena. He graduated in 2006 with a degree in illustration and immediately put all his energy into building a career in art: "I knew it was easier starting a band when you're young, rather than starting a band

“Going full-time as an artist was my way of being my own band”

when you have a family. So going full-time as an artist was my way of being my own band.”

It paid off pretty quickly. Andrew got his solo exhibition at the Thinkspace Gallery in 2007. In those days, he juggled exhibition with work as a commercial illustrator (Adidas, Lucky Brand Jeans, the Los Angeles Times). He still works commercially today, but is now in a position where he has more control. Still, commercial work isn't something tolerated solely for the money. Andrew uses it as an opportunity to push himself. ➡➡



BEING INSPIRED ON THE ROAD

Andrew Hem reveals how he painted his favourite piece. Sometimes, the journey is just as enjoyable as the destination...

WHIRLPOOL

"A piece that kept floating in my head after I went to Niagara Falls. I couldn't get it out of my head the whole trip, so I was eager to go home and paint it."



"I travel to most of the places I paint. Afterwards, the location, the moment, will come to mind when I'm daydreaming. I could be driving. I could be eating. These ideas come when I least expect it. It's like an image that stays with me and it'll only disappear if I paint it. I painted this whirlpool one week after I went to Niagara Falls.

When I paint outside, I use Acryla Gouache paint. I find it to be perfect for my

sketchbook painting. For my studio works, I use a Culver City company called Nova Color. I use any kind of brushes really. In fact, as of right now, I love using brushes from the dollar store. I can use cheap brushes, but you can never use low-quality paint.

Like most pieces, I don't have a final line drawing or colour comp. I start off with a loose line indication to map out my composition. Because of this method, I often

end up painting over several days' worth of painting. Each painting will have layers upon layers of mistakes; I painted the waterfall in this picture six times!

I struggled so much with the design of the waterfall, then one day I changed it to a circle and it became my favourite piece. Now, you might think I could save tons of time if I first did a final line drawing. But I actually like figuring out things as I go along."

IN MY SHOES

"Inspired by all the refugees. Being a refugee myself, this piece hits home for me. Nobody should make assumptions about someone when they don't know the struggles being in someone else's shoes."



➔ "Before, there was tons of going back and forth," says Andrew. "Don't get me wrong. There are still several jobs now that I have to go back and forth with tons of revision. But most of my clients give me full creativity."

"I like the balance in my work. I know that, doing personal work, I answer to nobody and get no feedback at all. So it's nice for me to be art-directed from time to time, because I would do stuff I normally wouldn't do on my own."

New images pop into Andrew's mind all the time, seemingly from nowhere. These ideas tend to come when he's doing mundane things: driving, sitting on a plane, cleaning the house. The difficult thing is figuring out how get the image out of his head and on to the canvas.

He starts with a very small version. He then shoots photographs that will help him build the image, or looks for relevant pictures in his reference library. He likes the finished piece to

“I know that, doing personal work, I answer to nobody and get no feedback at all”

be painted half from reference and half from imagination.

"I find that when I do all imagination, I tend to repeat myself and when I do all reference it becomes kind of stiff. Having a 50/50 blend is the perfect look I'm going for. The hard part is trying to translate that image in my head to the canvas. There are times when it does look better in my head, but the ultimate goal is for it to come out exactly how I picture it."

VAMPIRE BAT

Andrew still lives in Los Angeles and has a studio in the south of the city. He works up to 12 hours a day. He feels fortunate to have the time and space to do what he loves, but being alone all the time can get a bit depressing. So he makes an effort to regularly go out to eat, just to be around other people for a while. It can't help that he also keeps the hours of a vampire bat. ➔



COMING HOME

"Inspired by going to your childhood neighbourhood and seeing the changes after being gone a decade. I saw the gentrification and all of my friends had moved east."


IGLOOLIK

"Completed after visiting the Arctic Circle - my first time in 24-hour light. Similar to Niagara Falls, I had to paint this image in my head right when I get home."



GERMANY

"My sister quit her job and has been travelling the world for six years now. This piece is about doing what's important to you."



“I’m just lucky that my fiancé is an emergency room doctor who has the same hours as me”

➤ “My hours are all over the place. I wake up at 1pm and will get to the studio around 2pm. I work until 2am and sleep around 4am. I’m just lucky that my fiancé is an emergency room doctor who has the same hours as me.”

STYLISTED FIGURATIVE WORKS

The last story is about the time Andrew visited Cambodia. He went to his dad’s hometown, a rural place built around agriculture, and got lost. An old lady came up to him and asked if he remembered her. He didn’t. How could he? This was his first time in town. Then Andrew realised the old lady thought he was his dad.

Like his dad, Andrew teaches art – he’s lectured at his old art school, as well as Ringling and Otis. His dad’s big

FRAGMENTED

“I often travel solo and I can’t remember much from those trips. I do remember trips when I travel with someone, though.”



artistic influence was rural Cambodia, but Andrew’s influences are more diverse: gang culture, graffiti, anime, the Old Masters, American Wild West painters, superheroes, ninjas.

A piece by Andrew Hem could be talking very personally about the immigrant experience, about growing up in the gap between two cultures or, more universally, making us ask questions about our own home. Is home a place, people, memories, the memories of others, a certain period of time? Andrew could be showing you isolation in modern life, or ancient farming techniques, or just a really cool place he went on his holidays. Often he’s doing all of these things at once. Because Andrew’s paintings, like his stories, make you do some of the

BE EMBARRASSED BY YOUR WORK

Andrew Hem shares a unique way to help you decide whether or not your work is improving. File it under 'A' for awkward...

"When I was a senior in college, I wanted to look at my freshman work and hopefully think it was awful. If I didn't feel that way, I would've known that my growth wasn't as much as I'd expected. So, when I became a senior, and got out my freshman work, I was glad that couldn't barely even look at it because I was so embarrassed.

When you first do the work, it looks good to you at that time. But over the years, you train your eye to spot out the good. Every

five or so years, I look back at my old work hoping I will see these pieces as embarrassments like in college.

As you get older, changes becomes slower. You won't be able to spot out the same drastic improvements you saw when you were starting. So the biggest breakthrough for me has to be as a student when I compared my first year with my last. It was a rewarding feeling to see just how far I'd come. I'm constantly seeking out that same feeling."



GLIDING

"I saw people in Cambodia living in horrible conditions, but they were still able to be happy. I wanted to capture being young without a care in the world."

work. You're never entirely sure what's real and what's not, what's literal and what's metaphorical. The purpose of these snapshots of dreams is to make you stop and think.

"You adapt things that are familiar so they flow out of you in a unique way. I would label my art as stylised figurative works. That's because I draw my inspiration a lot from Old Masters and anime. These are two of my loves and mesh up into my paintings without my even trying. It just came naturally – like moving to figure-drawing from graffiti.

"Good art is something that moves you, that evokes emotion. Whether it makes you feel inspired, or gives you butterflies in your stomach, it stops you right in your tracks." 🌟

YOUNG FLIP

"When I was younger, I tried for years to be a B-boy. My friends would learn windmills in six months. It took me two years, but mastering it is one of my greatest childhood memories."



Ahmed Aldoori

Grungy cyberpunk imagery rubs shoulders with fantastical figures on the pages of this concept artist's sketchbook

Artist PROFILE

Ahmed Aldoori

LOCATION: US



Ahmed graduated from the Art Center College of Design in Entertainment Design. He's since worked in various industries, ranging from films, theme parks and video games, and lately has mostly been travelling and creating content for teaching online. He loves sketching and writing out his thoughts to solve inner emotional conflicts.

www.artstation.com/medders

STRIPES!

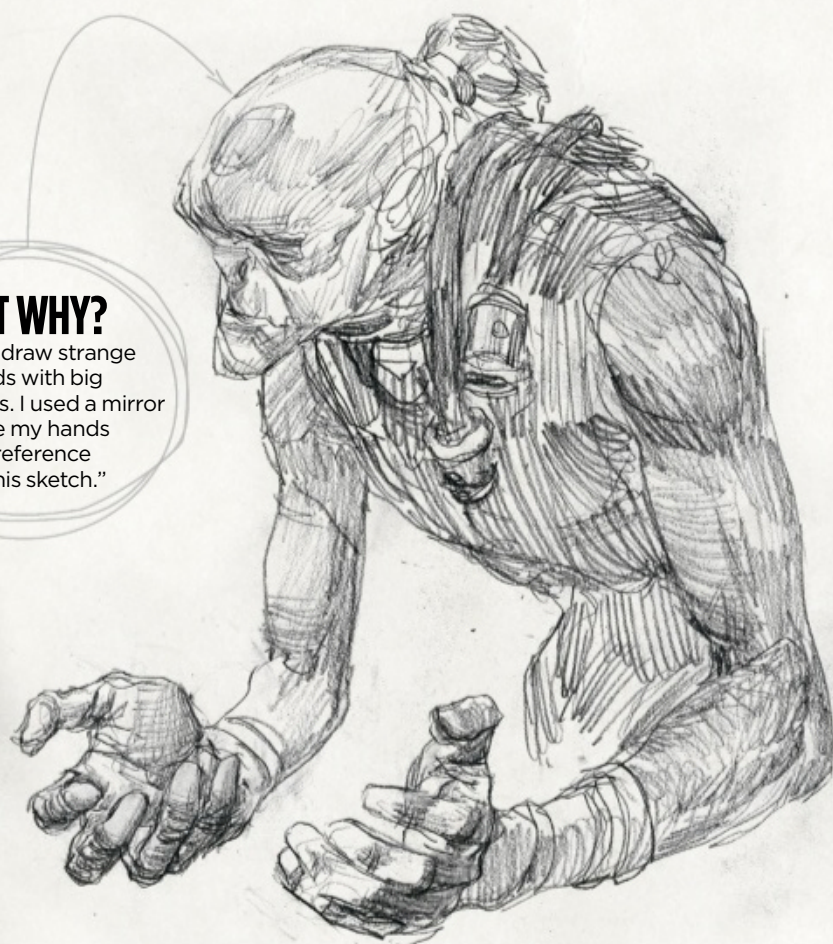
"I love striped clothing and costumes. The idea was to sketch out some cyberpunk or sci-fi type characters for a story."

BUT WHY?

"I often draw strange heads with big browridges. I used a mirror to use my hands as reference for this sketch."

NEO TOKYO

"For this sketch I was listening to Scandroid's song Neo Tokyo. It inspired part of my fascination with cyberpunk."





DISGRUNTLED

"I know, I know – I often draw a similar expression and leave the drawing unfinished. But I enjoy it!"

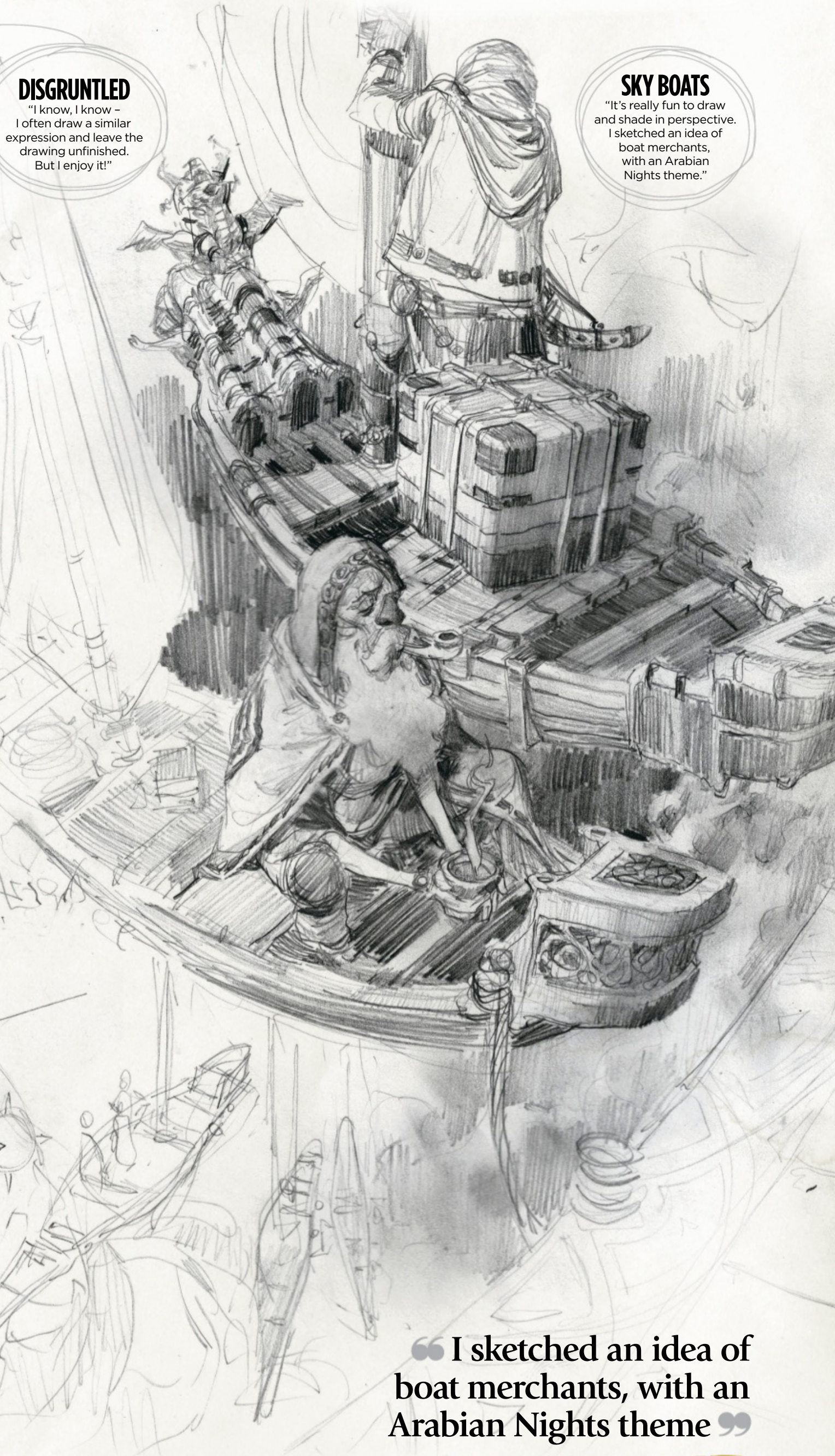
CURIOUS ORB

"I wish I had an explanation for this. But I certainly enjoy drawing this slight upward angle of heads, where you can see the underside of the jaw."



SKY BOATS

"It's really fun to draw and shade in perspective. I sketched an idea of boat merchants, with an Arabian Nights theme."



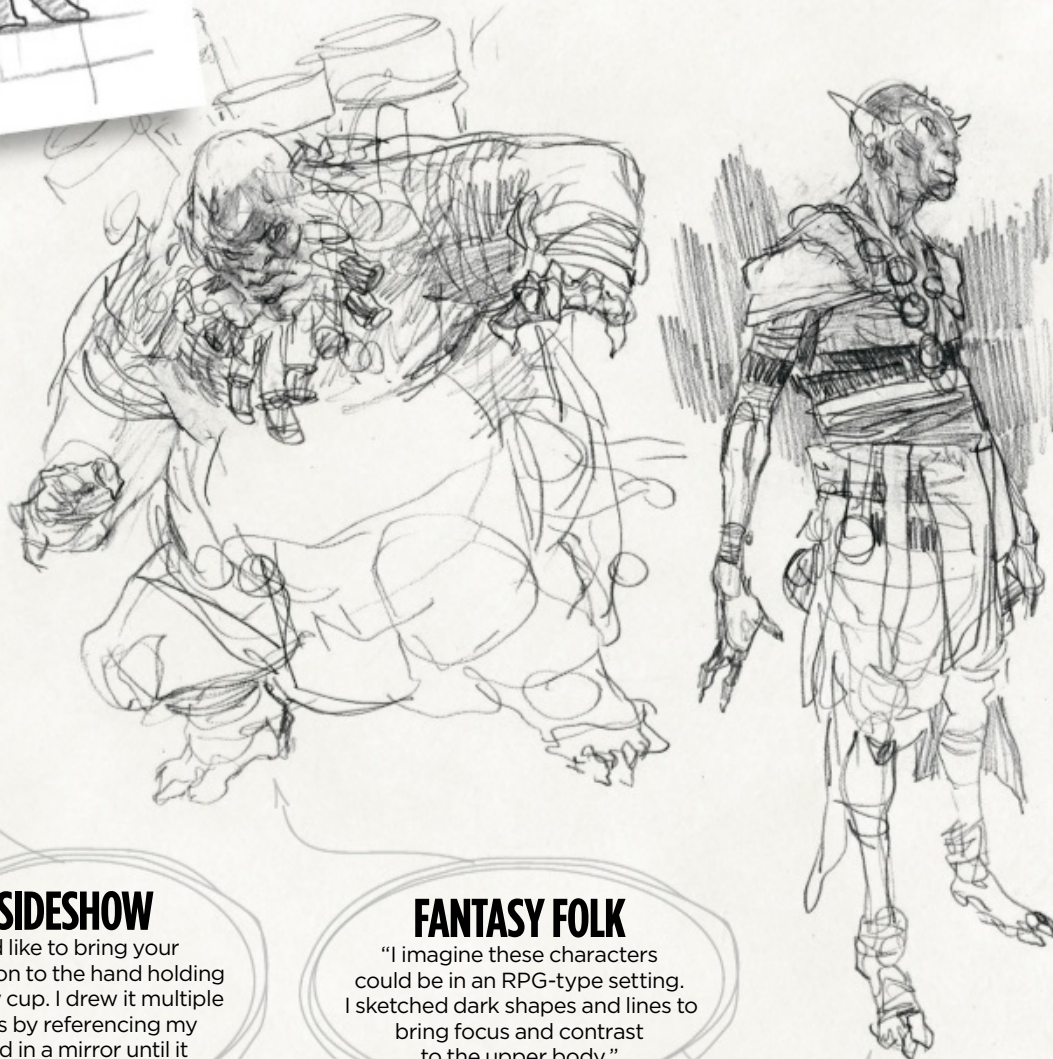
“ I sketched an idea of boat merchants, with an Arabian Nights theme ”

Sketchbook



SIDESHOW

"I'd like to bring your attention to the hand holding the tiny cup. I drew it multiple times by referencing my hand in a mirror until it looked right."



FANTASY FOLK

"I imagine these characters could be in an RPG-type setting. I sketched dark shapes and lines to bring focus and contrast to the upper body."



WASTELAND SPIRIT

"Another sketch that was started on an above three-quarter perspective angle. I used cylinder shapes to represent the arms and legs, then added details."



SKIN PRESS

"A tricky thing to pull off, but you can make something look like it's pressing into skin by making a soft round shadow above the object."

WEIRD, AND SURREAL

"More sketching on to a perspective floor at an above three-quarter perspective angle. I recommend experimenting with proportions and shapes, like the pointy shoes or the giant head of that strange butler."



“I recommend
experimenting
with proportions
and shapes...”

Sketchbook

CARNIVAL

Dark Circus! I love this stuff. I was experimenting with shading by smudging with my thumb toward specific directions away from the highlight areas.

BOTS

Starting with basic shapes such as cylinders and cubes, I sketched details and mechanical indications for these bots.

500 HANDS CHALLENGE

I created an online challenge to draw 500 hands, and this is one of the pages. I highly recommend doing this, I learned a lot about overlooked subtleties.



Do you want to share your sketches with your fellow ImagineFX readers? Send us an email with a selection of your art, captions for each piece and a photo and bio of yourself to sketchbook@imaginefx.com

TOP DOWN

It can be very useful to start your character sketches on a 3/4 perspective plane, as though they were a sculpture on a platform.

“It can be useful to start your character sketches on a 3/4 perspective plane”



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Issue 179

November 2019

Our concept art issue features Sparth on the cover. Inside is a workshop from the legendary concept artist, pro advice from Alex Jay Brady, Ben Mauro and Martin Nebelong, plus we talk to Donglu Yu and Ian McQue.



Issue 178

October 2019

Kim Jung Gi's exclusive art graces the cover of our drawing skills issue, which also features pro advice on using ArtRage and SketchBook, an interview with Timothy Von Rueden, and Finnian MacManus' sketchbook.



Issue 177

September 2019

We've got plenty of character concept advice this issue, from Aleksey Baydakov who painted the circus duo on the cover, to Serge Birault's pro insights on character concepts. Plus: artists reveal how they use references.



Issue 176

August 2019

Chantal Horeis' gorgeous cover art is your gateway to interviews with JAW Cooper and Bastien Lecouffe Deharme, workshops on Procreate's new text tools and abstract mark-making, plus we reveal alternatives to Photoshop.

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Christmas 2018



Issue 167
December 2018



Issue 166
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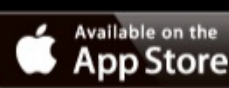


Issue 165
October 2018



Issue 164
September 2018

GET YOUR DIGITAL EDITION THROUGH THESE OUTLETS:



*Resource files are available from issue 85 onwards.



ARTIST PORTFOLIO

ALEX KONSTAD

The American illustrator and concept artist reveals to **Gary Evans** how hard times got him where he is today...



SLEEP PARALYSIS
Alex terrifyingly depicts the inability to move or speak while half-asleep.

Alex Konstad was broke. The illustrator had been living in San Diego where rent was relatively cheap. To get by, he had to make around \$1,000 a month – though, at a push, \$800 would do it. But then he moved to Santa Monica – the beach city west of downtown Los Angeles – and his bills almost tripled.

Alex was living with his friend and fellow artist Dan LuVisi. They were both at the beginning of their careers. Literally and metaphorically, they were

hungry (their combined weekly grocery budget was \$10). The pair rented an office together where they would work from 8am right through to 3am, cycle home, sleep a few hours, then get up and do it all over again.

“I had a lot of help from my parents while I figured my life out” the American artist says, “and, also, lots of credit card debt. I had many small-time freelance jobs during this period, but it was quite hard to pay any bills with the income. The industry rates were abysmally low for the jobs I took

“I had a lot of help from my parents while I figured my life out, and lots of debt”

on. I did whatever I could to keep my head above water.”

Santa Monica was a grind. But even while struggling for money, he and Dan made sure to stick at personal projects. And this would be the blueprint for the rest of Alex’s career, balancing commercial and personal work, making sure the skills from one fed into the other, and vice versa.

Alex got his first “real” job in 2015. An art director from the cinematic department at Blizzard Entertainment spotted his work on Instagram and

Artist PROFILE

Alex Konstad

LOCATION: US

FAVOURITE ARTISTS: Wayne Barlow, Zdzisław Beksiński, Hieronymus Bosch, Brom and Moebius

SOFTWARE USED: Photoshop

WEB: www.alexkonstad.com

offered Alex a position in-house: “I was ecstatic,” the artist says. “I’d always imagined myself just painting Magic: The Gathering cards and maybe working on some video games in the future. Now it was my chance to get my foot in the door.”

AN UNLIKELY COMBINATION

Alex grew up in Portland, Oregon. His childhood was riding bikes through parks. It was hopping fences, running through back gardens with other neighbourhood kids. He was into art – graffiti especially. When it was time for college, he picked the unlikely combination of fine art and sustainable engineering.

Art alone, he reasoned, was never going to pay the bills, but engineering seemed like a solid career. It didn’t ➡➡



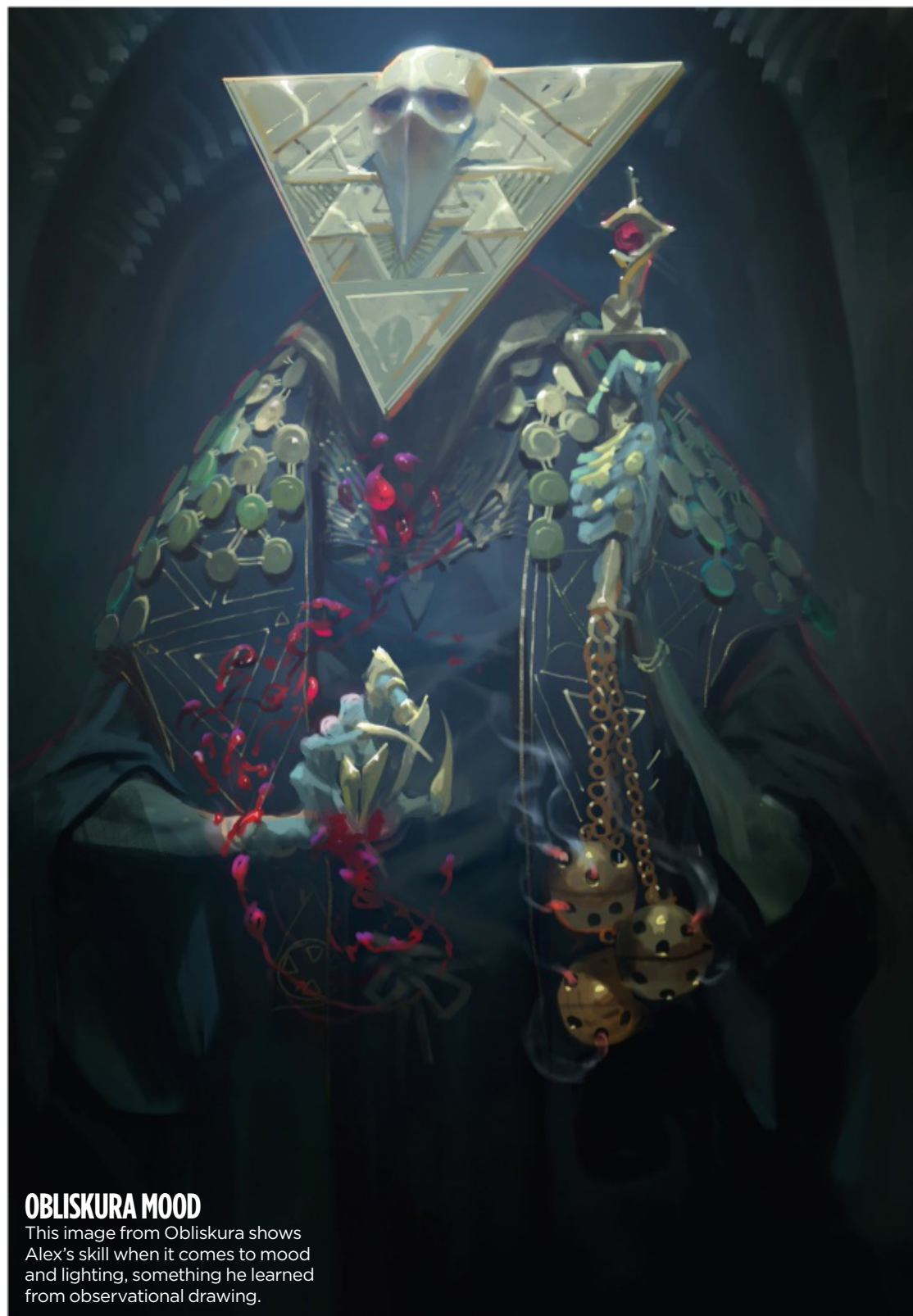
WIZARD WORKS

A character from the Wizard Works faction of Alex’s personal project Genesis Wars.

THE RESPLENDENT ONES

Obliskura is another of Alex's personal projects, a world in which he indulges his love of horror.





OBLISKURA MOOD

This image from Obliskura shows Alex's skill when it comes to mood and lighting, something he learned from observational drawing.

“It was a fun time with long hours in the studio... This was the beginning of me taking art very seriously”

➤➤ help that the art department at Portland State University College of the Arts insisted Alex's work, mainly illustration stuff, wasn't proper art. He dropped out and found conceptart.org, which proved not only that illustration was proper art, but that people paid the bills by doing it.

Aged 21, Alex moved to Austin, Texas. He hung out and studied with artists from The Art Department, which offered online lessons and face-to-face workshops. Here, the artist was encouraged to experiment. The instructors were illustrators with plenty of industry experience. So whatever the student felt like doing, the instructors would help them work out

how to get it done. They knew how to solve visual problems in exciting ways.

“It was a fun time with long hours in the studio and lots of figure drawing. This was the beginning of me taking art very seriously. This was probably around 2012, and I've been pursuing it ever since.”

Alex often stayed at The Art Department till the early hours. One night, he was working alone when he heard the doors slamming and footsteps across the floor. Just two instructors had keys, so he assumed it was one of them. He had a look around, but nobody was there. This building was a former funeral home. The room in which Alex worked ➤➤



GENESIS WARS

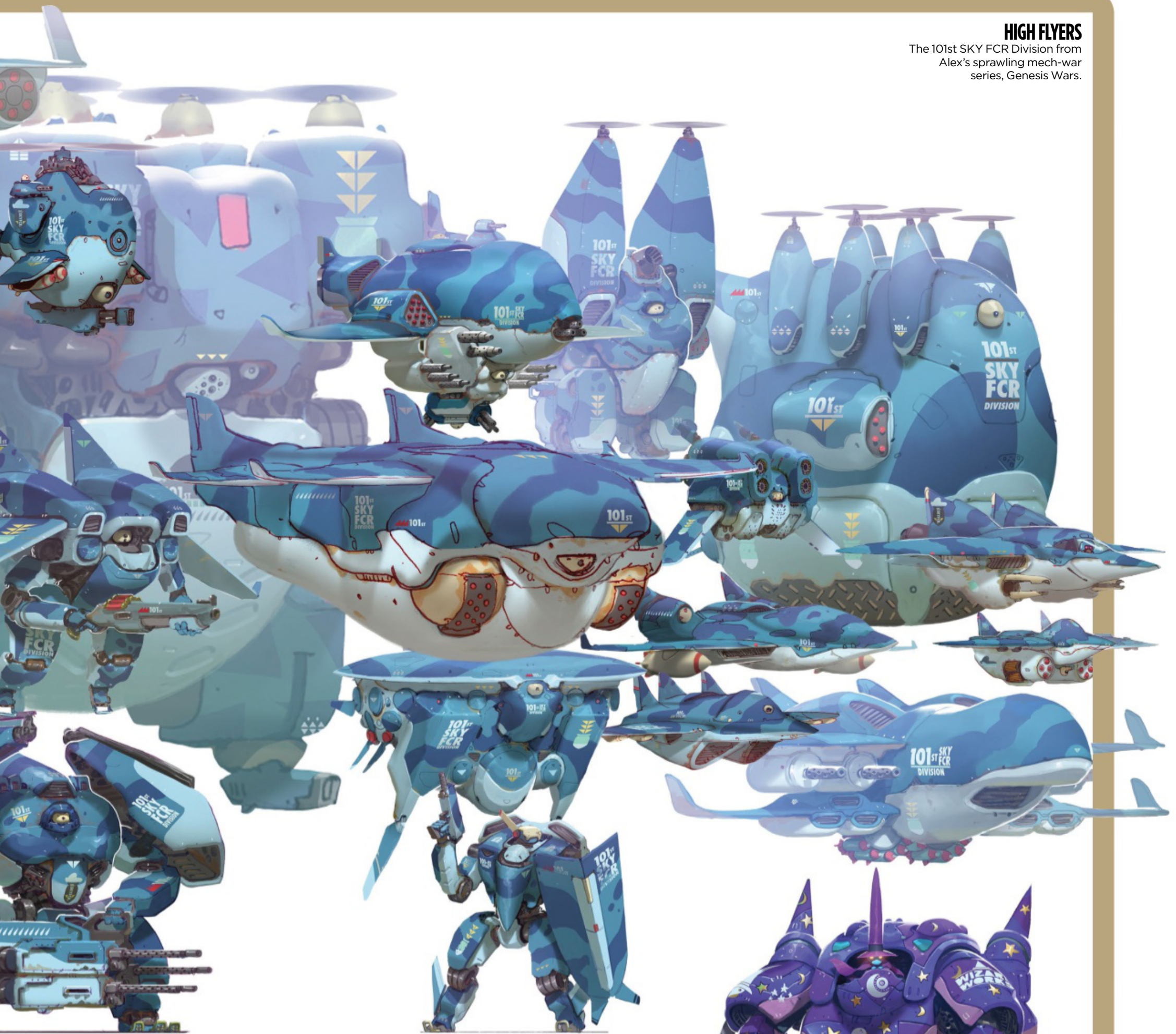
Alex explains how he portrayed a army of distinctive killing machines

“This image depicts one of the factions from a personal project that I started, called Genesis Wars. It's a project about rival factions of mechanised nations fighting against each other during a pivotal moment in their history.

These guys are the servants of wizards whom have managed to rebel from their evil masters and now wish to take part in the mayhem. These mech and

HIGH FLYERS

The 101st SKY FCR Division from Alex's sprawling mech-war series, Genesis Wars.



vehicle designs have been a lot of fun to put together and came about from my love of magic and technology.

I don't have a lot of work-in-progress shots, but still have one sheet of sketches that shows how they started [see page 61]. I always carry a sketchbook and quite a lot of my work starts there. I do a lot of writing for my own projects as well and always try to start with a little bit of prose or background details when

starting pieces. This foundation usually dictates the direction for a lot of my personal work.

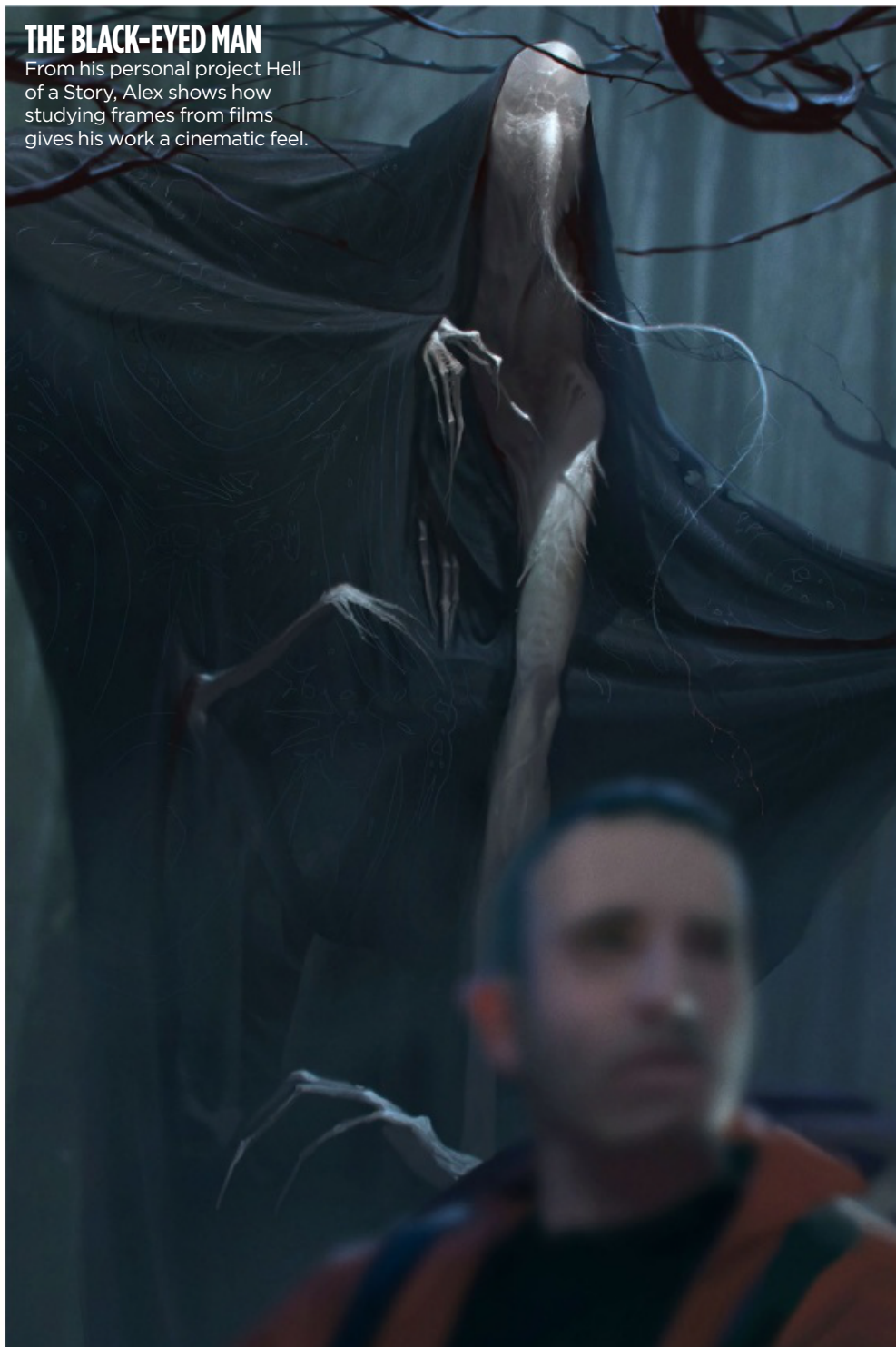
From the moment I'm done with writing I'll usually start to thumbnail things out, either in my head or in my sketchbook, turning the shapes and the mood over in my head until I have what I desire. This is the moment when I'll translate things to my computer and start blocking out the paintings in Photoshop."

**READY FOR ACTION**

A member of the rebelling Wizard Works faction, ready to step into the mayhem of the Genesis Wars.

THE BLACK-EYED MAN

From his personal project Hell of a Story, Alex shows how studying frames from films gives his work a cinematic feel.



OBLISKURA

From Obliskura, this image shows the unlikely friendship between a colossal creature and the Wandering Assassin.

➡ was where they had kept the dead bodies. After that, he quit staying late by himself.

ANGLING FOR FUTURE WORK

Alex structures his portfolio and social media posts to reflect the kind of work he's looking to get in the future. More character pieces if he wants to do more characters. More keyframe stuff if he wants to more keyframes. Past clients include Sony Online Entertainment, Shield Break Studios and Games Workshop. After Blizzard, Alex started getting into visual development, working on various animated films. He mainly works in-house now – currently at Netflix – which means he limits freelance commissions so he can focus on the day job and personal projects.

Alex was recently working as an art director on a troubled movie. The project took two-and-a-half years, and it was very stop-start. So Alex began a string of personal projects – Hell of a Story, Horror Book, Genesis Wars –

because he needed something for himself, a project over which he had more control over and could see through to the end. It was around this time when he also started a series of horror. He was stressed out, pent up and tense, and all that came out in his personal art.

“My personal projects tend to be so radically different from what I do for

“My personal projects tend to be so radically different from what I do for work”

work. The only real influence the day job has is on the fundamentals involved, because I'm always making sure they're as tight as possible.”

Alex is into creatures, he's into building worlds, and he's into showing you something you've never seen before. He's good at creating mood. When he started out, he was doing a lot of observational work, figure

drawing and drawing from life. But he would always take this a step further: he would paint something from life – look at it, really study it, and paint under several different lights. Then he would try to paint his own version of that artwork from memory. It didn't have to be exact. He just had to put what he'd learned into practice – the way the light fell on that object, or how the surface looked. He's also a keen photographer. He studies frames from films by his favourite directors, focusing on how they're lit, how they're coloured, the elements that go into creating a particular mood.

Alex always carries a sketchbook. That's where most work starts out. For personal projects, he often does a bit of writing: back stories, background details, stuff that helps bring it to life. After writing, he draws thumbnails – either in a sketchbook or in his head – playing around with shapes until it starts to look right. Next he moves on to the computer. He blocks out the painting in Photoshop – he has an ➡

THE RIDDLED ONE

"The Riddled One sits atop the last falls of the Onilith, on the border of the Rubicons. Waiting, watching, guarding."



JERSEY DEVIL

"I pulled up slowly as I noticed the road block. The closer I came the farther away I wished I was."



THE IDEA BEHIND HELL OF A STORY

Alex's personal project invites viewers to visit the darker side of his imagination...

"This whole project came about after I realised there wasn't a tremendous amount of spooky, Lovecraftian art floating around in the world – art that fits the mood I have in my head when reading these stories.

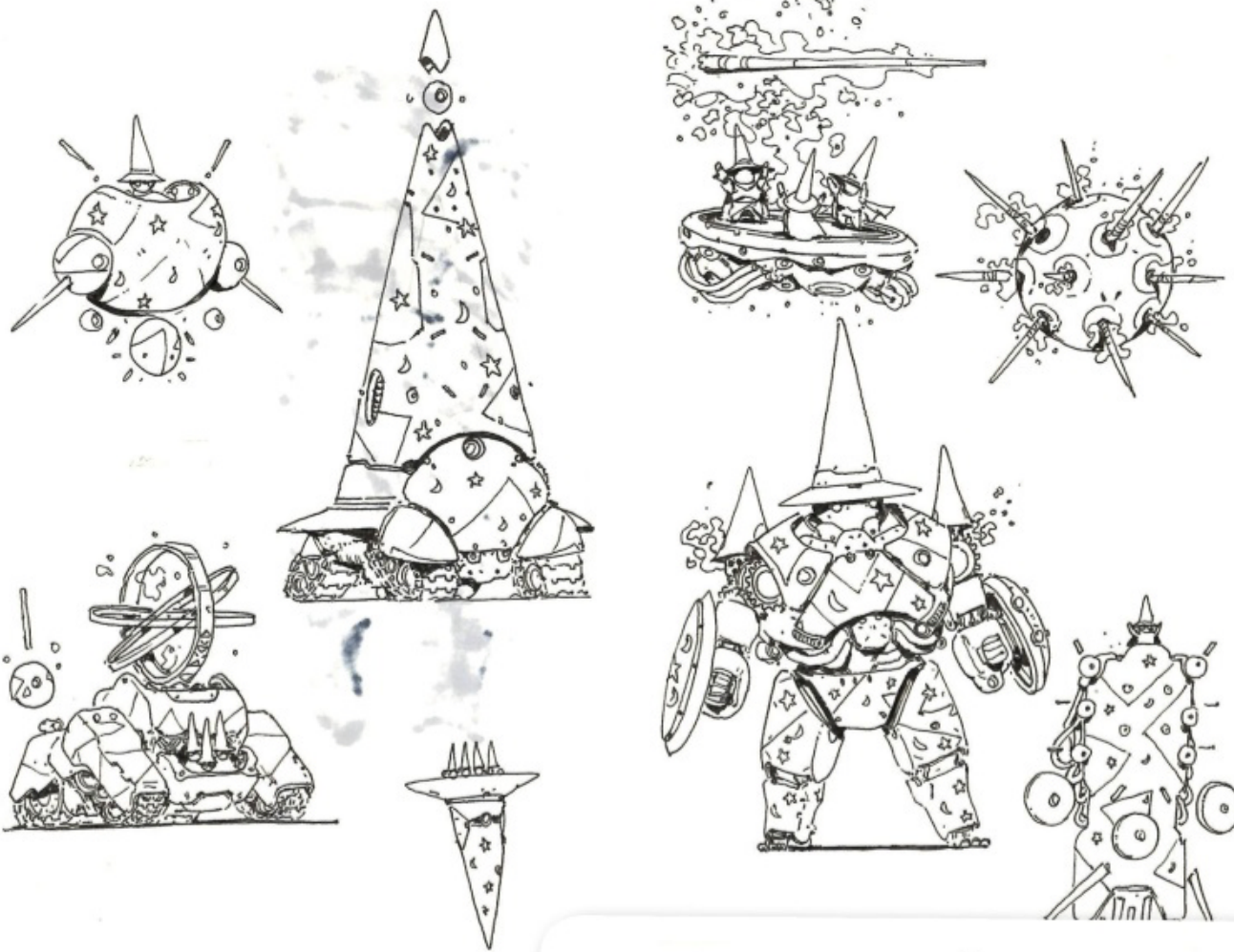
I'm a big, big, big fan of horror films and fiction, so that definitely inspired this project: filmmakers like John Carpenter, Ari Aster, Phil Tippett, David Cronenberg, David Lynch, Wes Craven, Lars Von Trier; authors like HP Lovecraft, Robert W Chambers, Thomas Ligotti; and artists like Junji Ito, Zdzisław Beksiński, Brom, and Wayne Barlowe as well.

When it comes to giving advice on painting horror art, I recommend focusing on the narrative moment of the scene, and how to get the most impact out of it through design, light and composition. Watch lots of horror movies too. Lots of them. Then watch some more movies – lots and lots of inspiration into the tank. Then paint a lot, make a ton of the images you want to make, then throw them all out and make some more."

THE WITCHING HOUR

"With a wheezing rattle the closet door creaked open, waking me from sleep. As I gained my senses I found the silence much more unsettling than the presence standing before me."





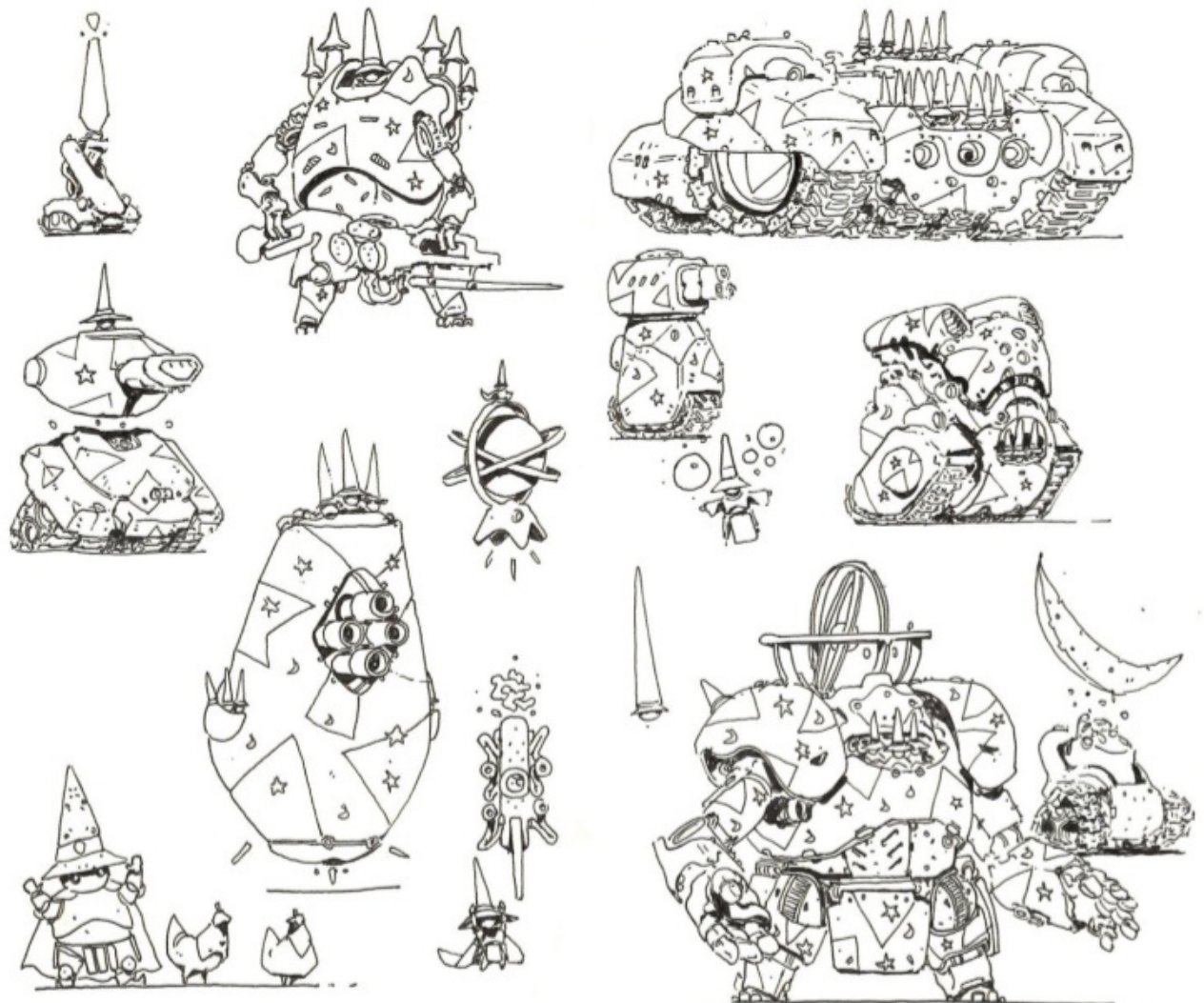
“I have a lot of interests and things that I nerd out on...”

➔ iMac for painting, a PC for 3D work. He might study references at this point. Alex uses a lot of his own photography for his horror art.

LEARNING FROM HIS PAST ART

These days, Alex tries to focus on doing one thing at a time, but that doesn't mean each piece is done in isolation. Every piece is built on top of all the pieces done before it, no matter how different they appear. Insect studies help with helicopter designs, while drawing better mammals can mean drawing better tanks.

For a long time, Alex kept up the Santa Monica schedule, working on his art 14 hours a day – or more. He tries to take it a bit easier these days. The artist works out three times a week to offset the long hours at his desk. But the hours are still pretty hardcore: Alex wakes up at 6.30am, goes to the gym, gets back home for 8am. He starts work at 9am and is back home by 7pm. After dinner, he paints until midnight – though he now allows himself the occasional night off to watch films or hang out with friends. This is increasingly important: he's trying to learn when to say enough is



GENESIS ROUGHS

Alex's initial sketches of the vehicle designs that feature in his personal project Genesis Wars.

enough, to give himself time off, to refill the tank.

Recently, Alex has been looking over his body of work. He wanted to see how it had changed over the years, but also how it might continue to change in the future. Where is his work going? What might his work look like in, say, 10 years' time?

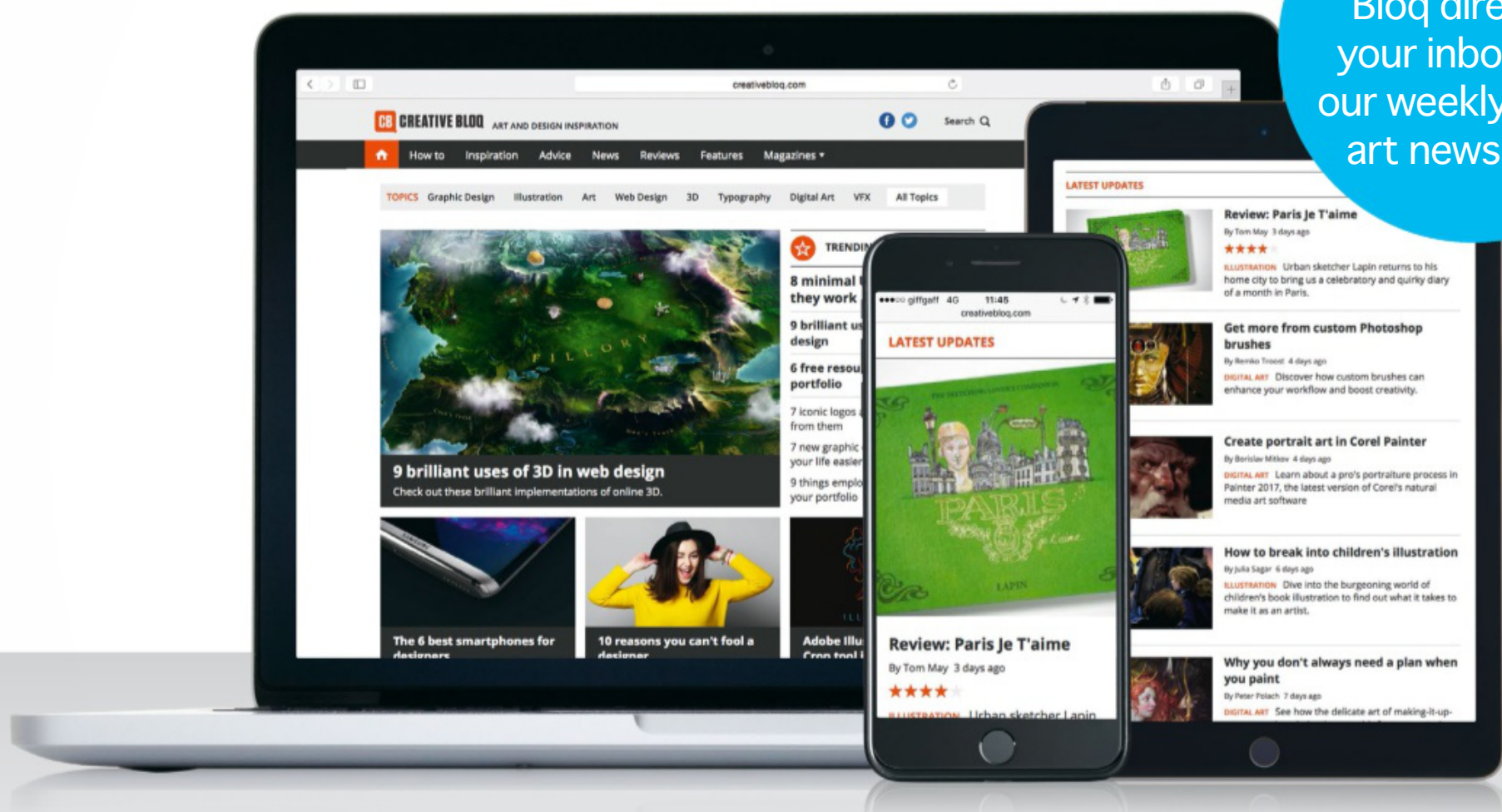
"I'm not sure how I would describe my work," Alex says. "The largest body of my work is dark fantasy or Lovecraftian horror, with some sci-fi

thrown in for good measure." For definite, the artist would like to write his own stories and direct his own films. He even has one eye on fashion – particularly designing footwear.

Alex continues: "I have a lot of interests and things I nerd out on: other artists' work, music, movies, anime, nature, plants, animals... I just try to mix them all up as much as possible and be true to what I really like about making art: just trying to keep things strange and different."

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Download each workshop's resources by turning to page 8. And if you see the video workshop badge, you can watch the artist in action, too.



Advice from the world's best artists



This issue:

66 Paint vibrant portrait art

Daniel Bolling Walsh makes use of custom brushes and a range of Photoshop layer modes to create a painterly portrait piece.

74 Create a card art portfolio

Illustrator Noah Bradley shows how he paints impactful artwork for card games.

80 Core Skills: Krita

Sara Tepes reveals how Krita's filter tools can help to make a piece stand out on the canvas.

84 Unique ways to create portraits

Explore new approaches and techniques in your personal work, with Jenn Ravenna.

Photoshop

PAINT VIBRANT PORTRAIT ART



Daniel Bolling Walsh reveals how he makes use of custom brushes and a range of Photoshop layer modes to create a painterly portrait piece

Artist PROFILE

Daniel Bolling Walsh

LOCATION: Australia

Twenty-nine year old Daniel studied at the Swedish Academy of Realist Art. In his spare time the concept artist loves rock climbing. www.danielbolling.com



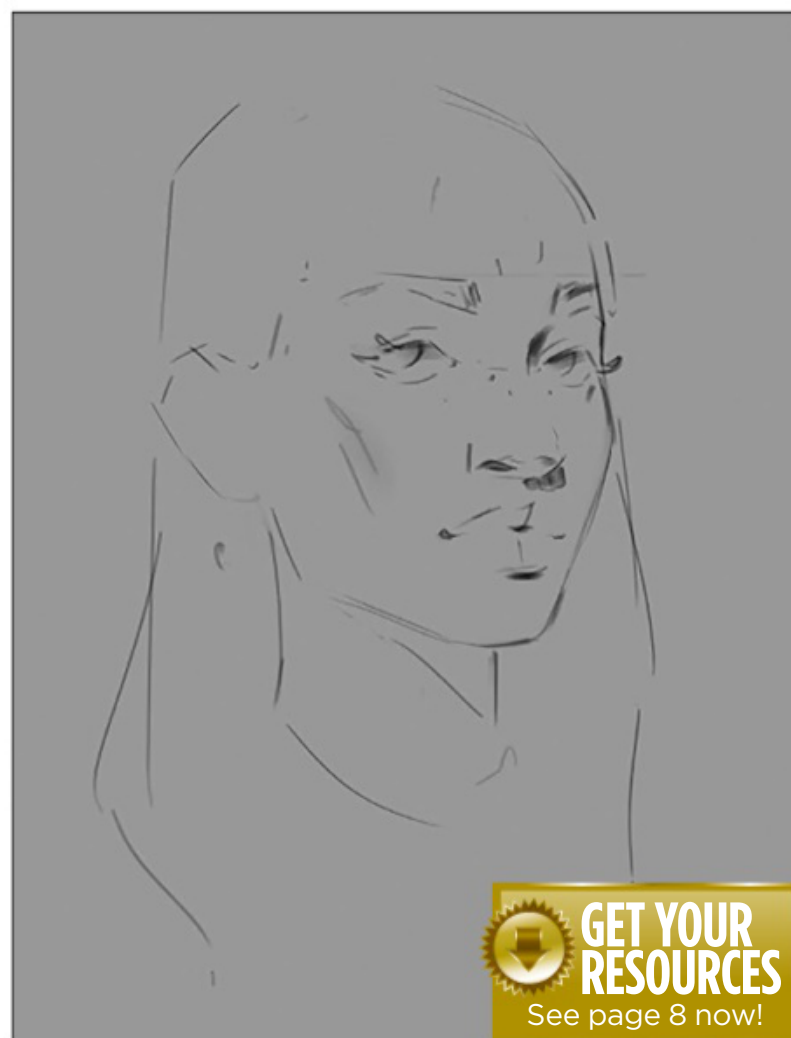
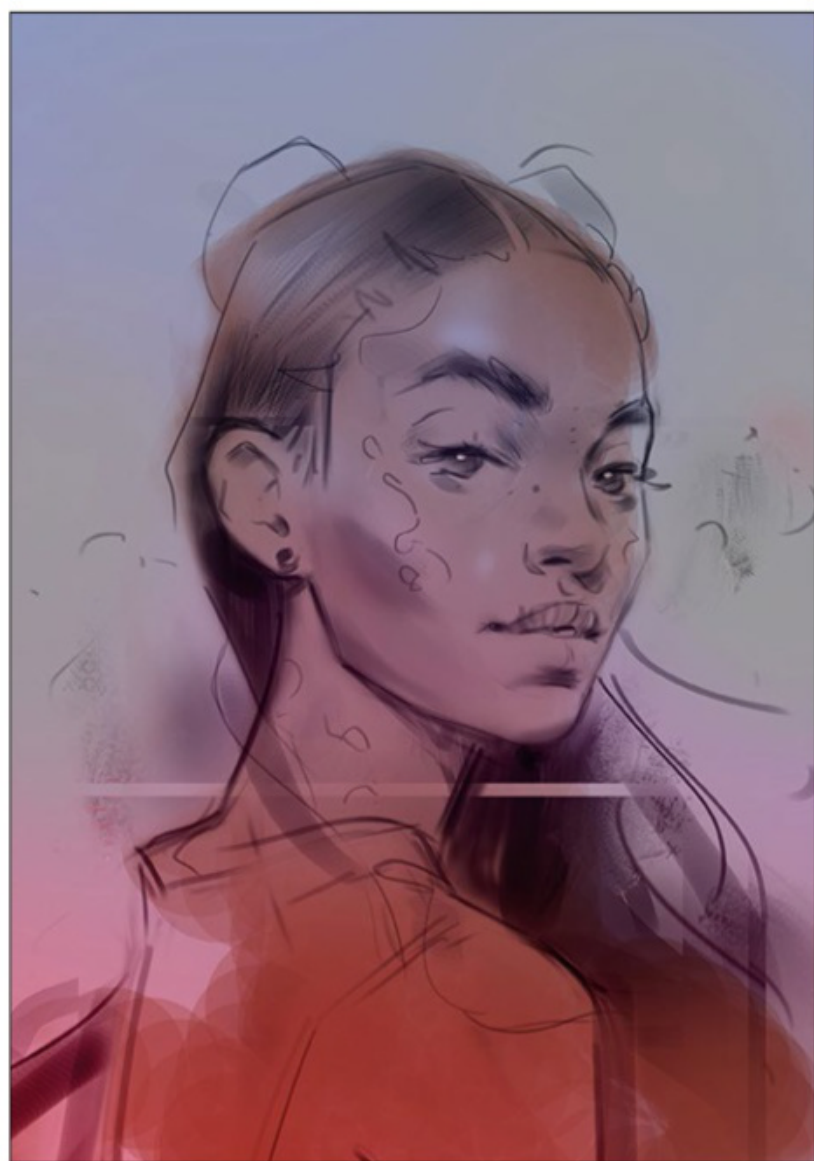
In this workshop I'll take you through my process of painting a portrait of a woman in her mid-20s. I'm going for an overall painterly and expressive style that makes use of a vibrant warm colour palette.

I'll start with a line drawing with some basic greyscale values blocked in. I'll then use Photoshop layer

modes as well as adjustment layers over the top of the drawing to experiment with colours, and begin establishing the colour palette. After I've made a few different colour mockups, I'll choose my favourite to push further to a finished painting.

During this stage I'll focus on some of the facial features and start to define the forms of the face with more opaque and detailed

brushstrokes. At this point hopefully I'll feel confident that the focal point is working and I can then play around with the shapes as well as the contrast of sharp and soft edges using my favourite Photoshop tool, the Mixer brush. I'll experiment throughout the process, and will make some late adjustments to the composition to try and add to the overall warm feel of the subject and her expression.



 **GET YOUR RESOURCES**
See page 8 now!

1 Sketching some ideas

During this stage I make a few different sketches to see what kind of pose will work for the piece. For the subject I'm thinking about the gesture and her eye contact with the viewer. She should feel friendly! I keep these really loose and I also focus on my line work and the overall composition.

2 Time to draw!

My time at the Swedish Academy of Realist Art was fun. We did a lot of kroki (life drawing) as well as studying the master works of Charles Bargue. His works begin quite structured with very straight lines, and so this stops me from attempting to get the curves right in the first place. It's much like simplifying your sketch to make sure you're getting your proportions correct. ➡➡



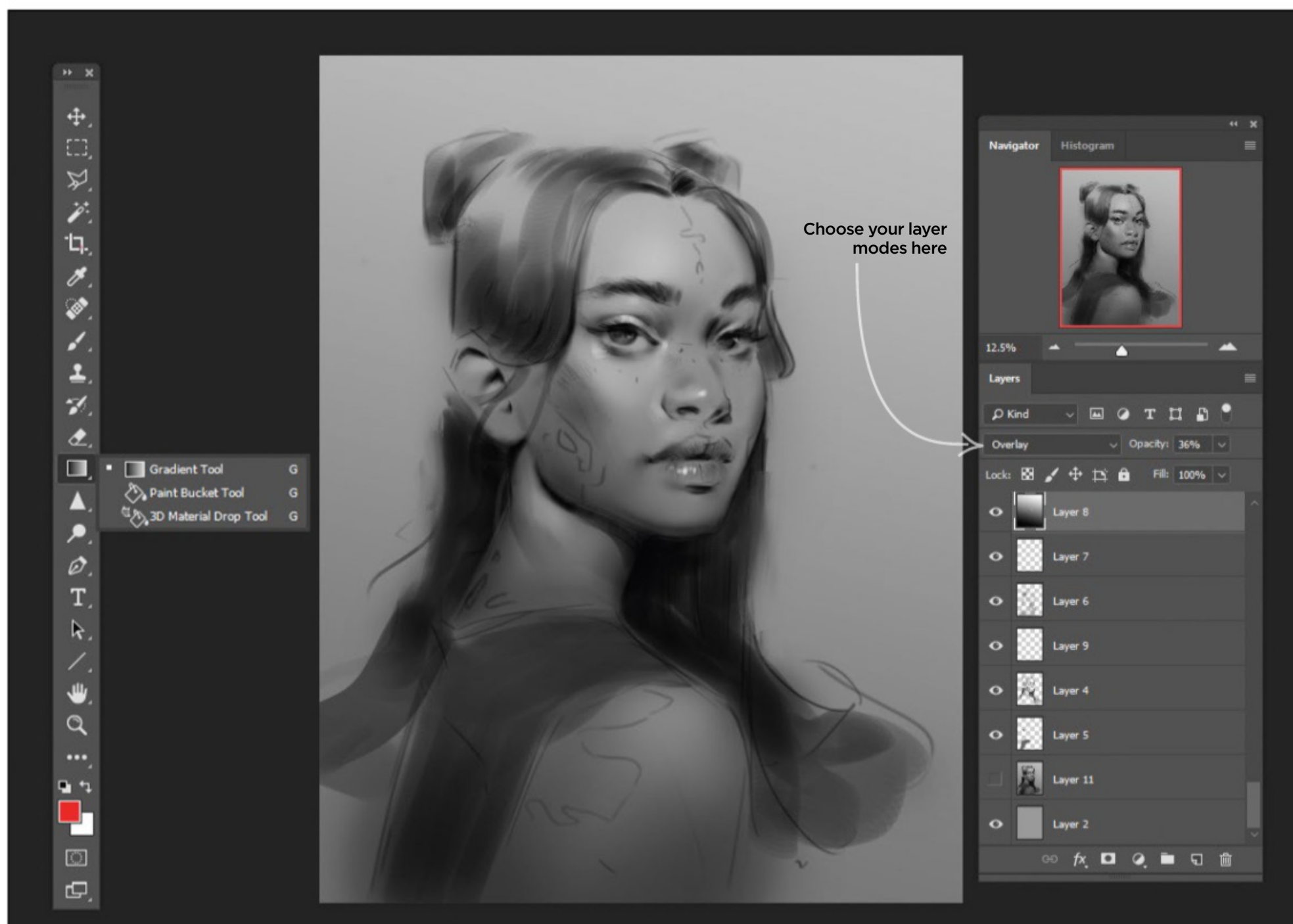
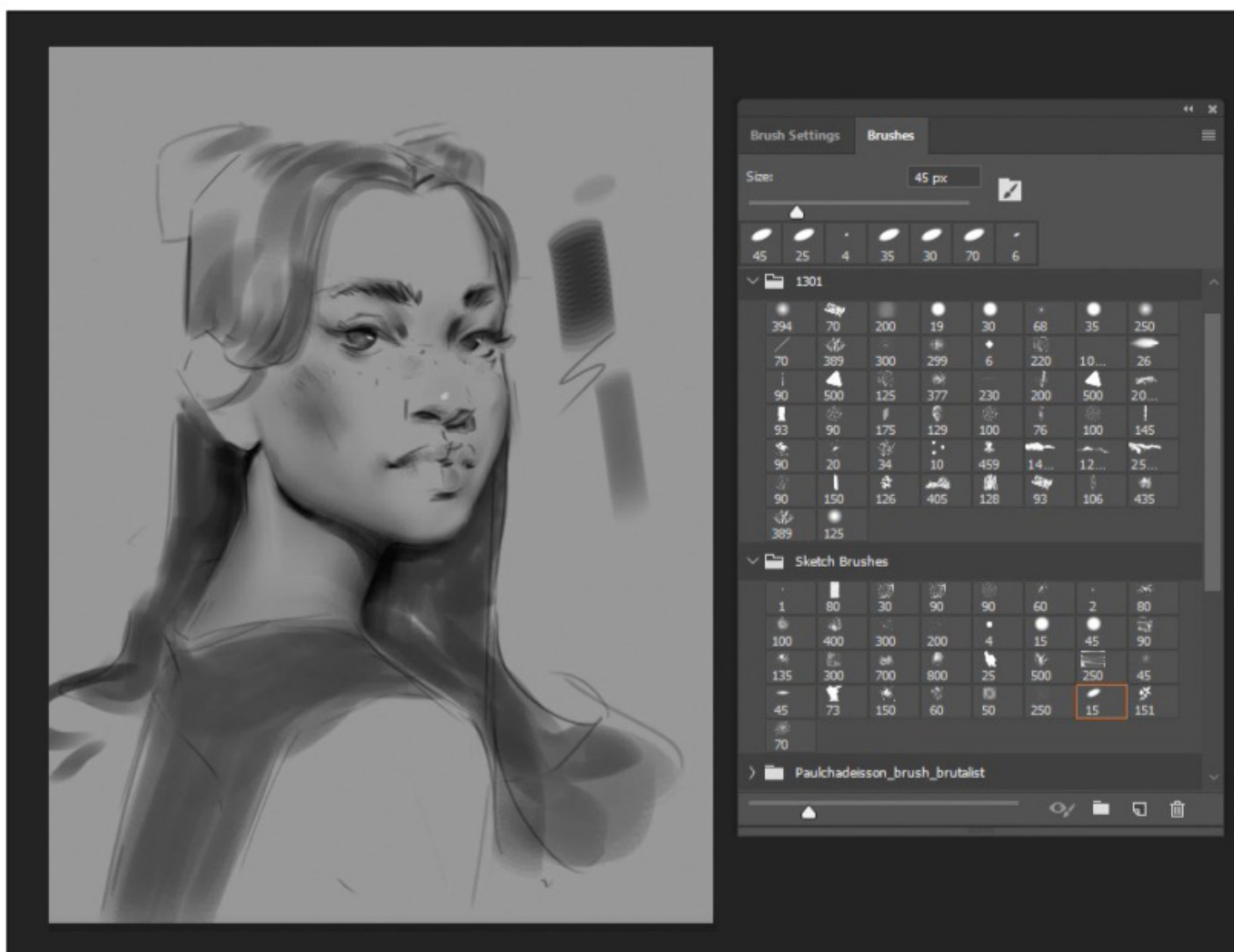
Workshops

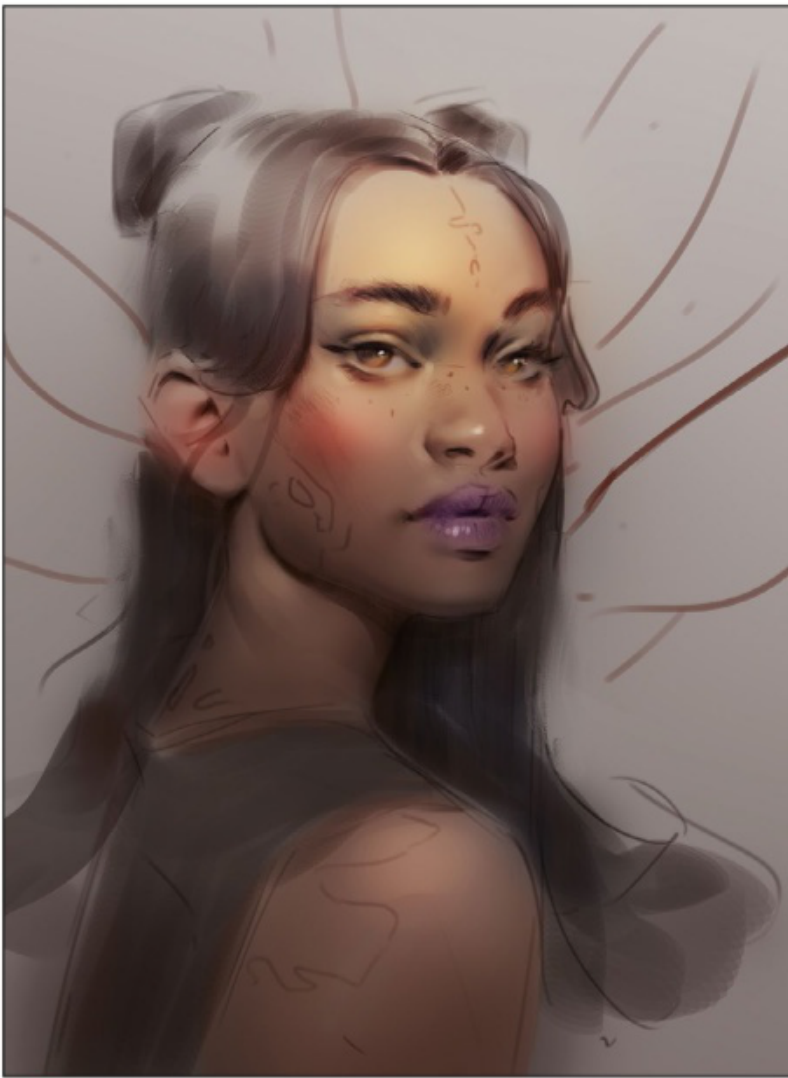
3 Bring in blocks of flat value

I add in blocks of flat values using a large brush, which further helps me to achieve the correct proportions. I use an oval brush to do both the line work and block-in. I'm zoomed out a lot of the time during this stage. I don't have too many keybindings in Photoshop, but one function that I use a lot is Flip canvas, which I've bound to Ctrl+Alt+Q.

4 Adding a light source

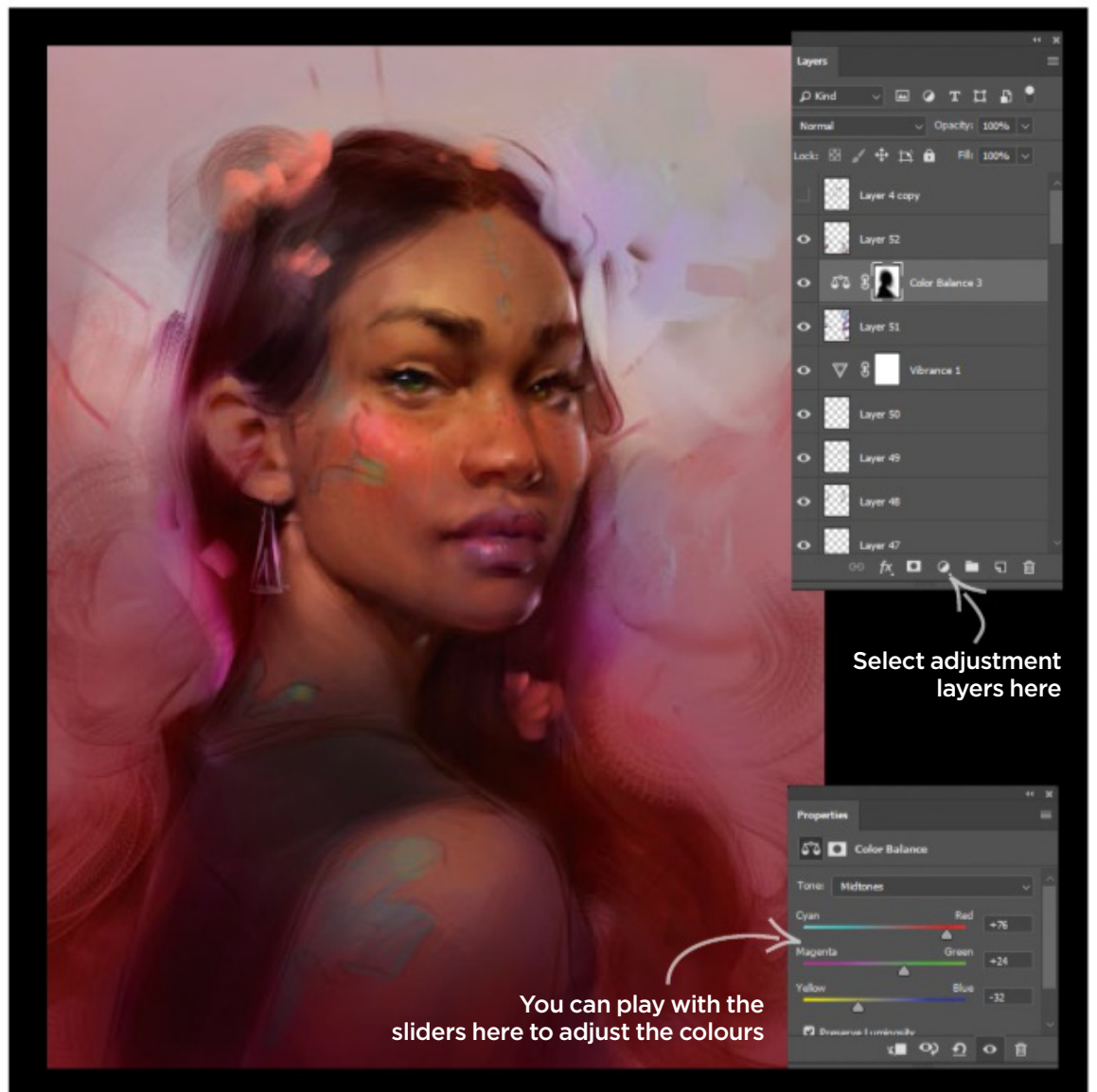
Now the face is nicely framed by the hair. The sketch reads well in thumbnail form, while the shape and anatomy – although still quite stylised – is working. I want to give the portrait a light source from above so I apply a black and white gradient over the sketch using the Overlay layer mode.





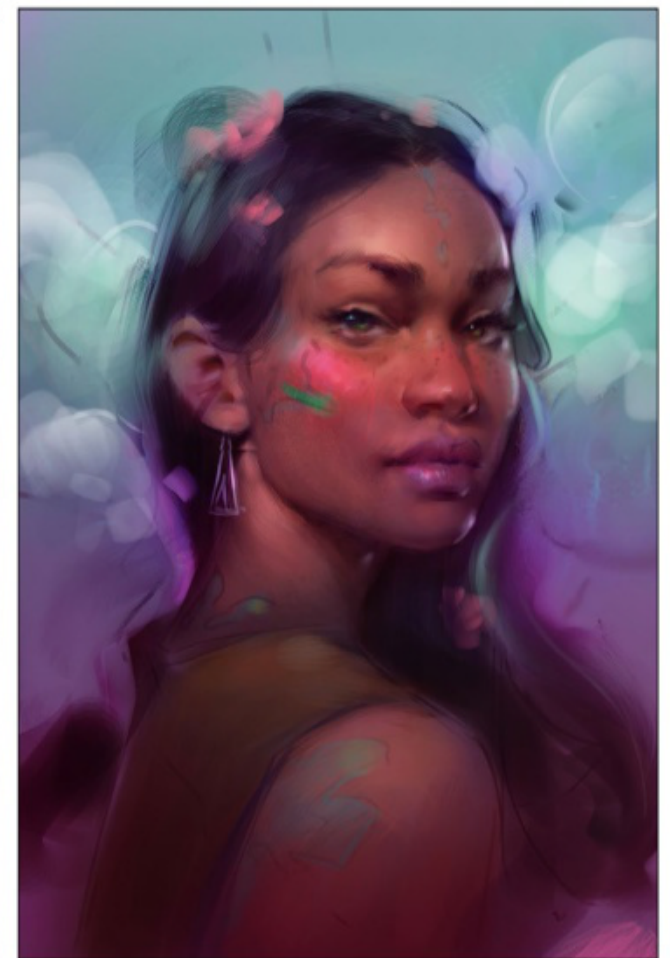
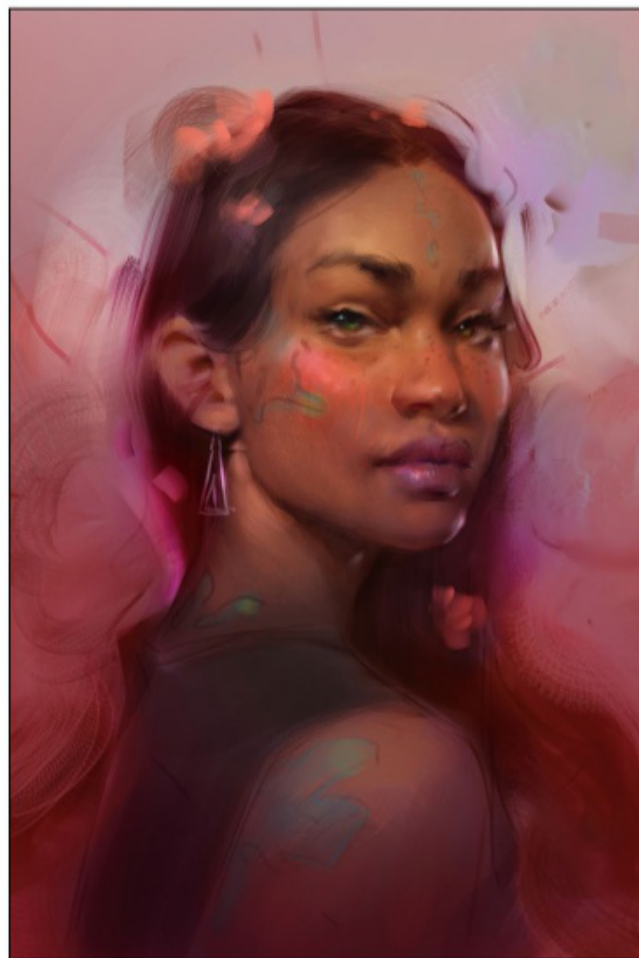
5 Colour using layer modes

I start to experiment with colour over the top of my sketch. I make a new layer and set it to Overlay, then take my soft Round brush and paint in a value of skin tone. Next, I make a separate layer set to Color Dodge and brush a warm mid-value orange over her face, which emphasises the light shining down on to the woman.



6 Experiment with adjustment layers

Another handy Photoshop tool is an adjustment layer. These are your image adjustment tools, just set to a layer. I use the Color Balance adjustment layer a lot to play with the colours of my piece: they can help to tie the overall palette of the portrait together. I use many of these throughout my paintings.



7 Creating a range of colour mock-ups

I use adjustments layers and a layer mask to alter my colour palettes. I make three different versions to see what I think looks best and suits the mood of her expression. I want her to be warm and welcoming, so warm reds and purples are my colours of choice. ➡

RESOURCES

**WORKSHOP
BRUSHES**

PHOTOSHOP

**CUSTOM BRUSHES:
45 OVAL BRUSH**

For the early sketch and value block-in, all while working in greyscale.

**394 SOFT TEXTURED
BRUSH**

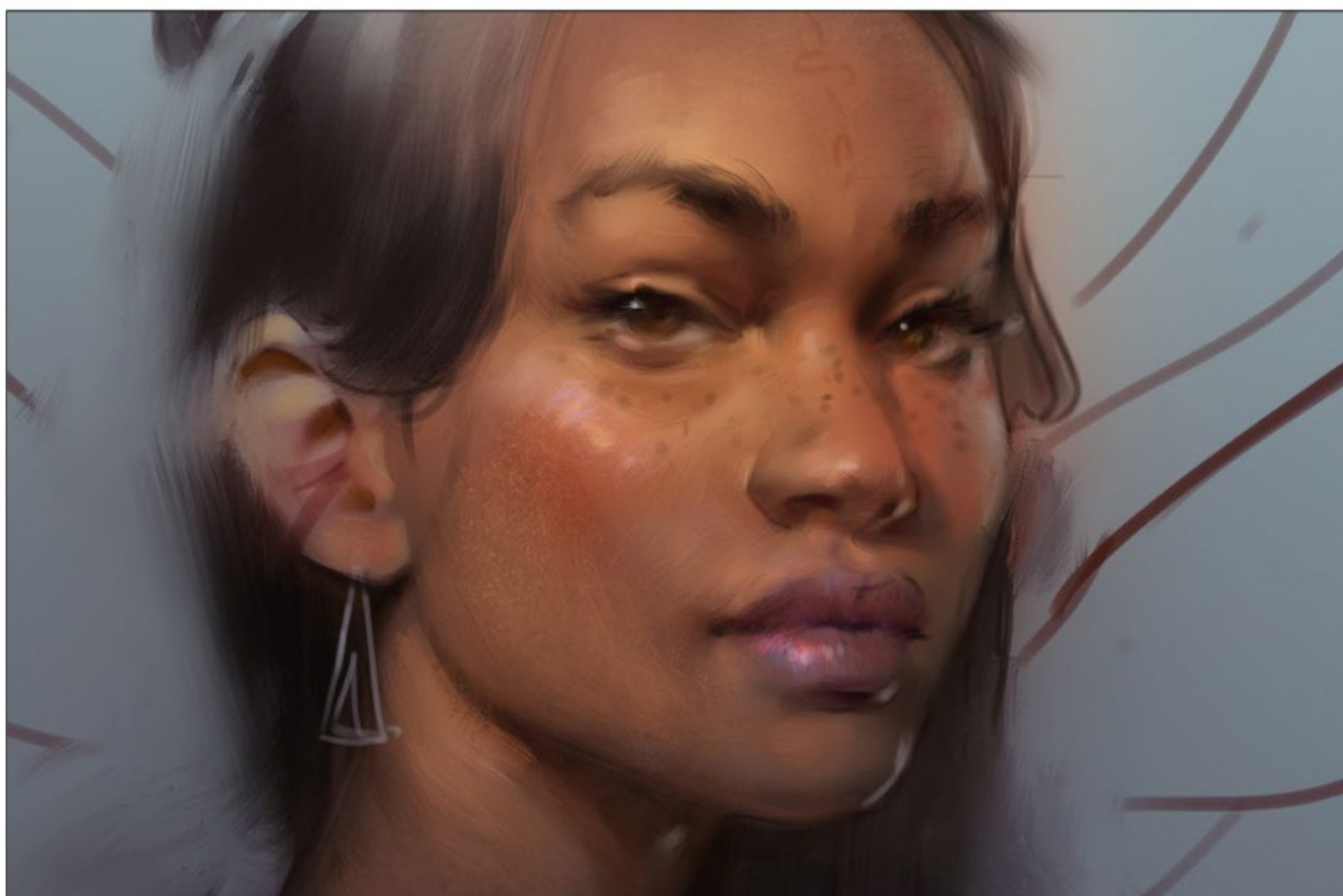
This brush enables me to soften edges while retaining texture.

250 SOFT ROUND

I use this as a large brush when I add colours over my greyscale image.

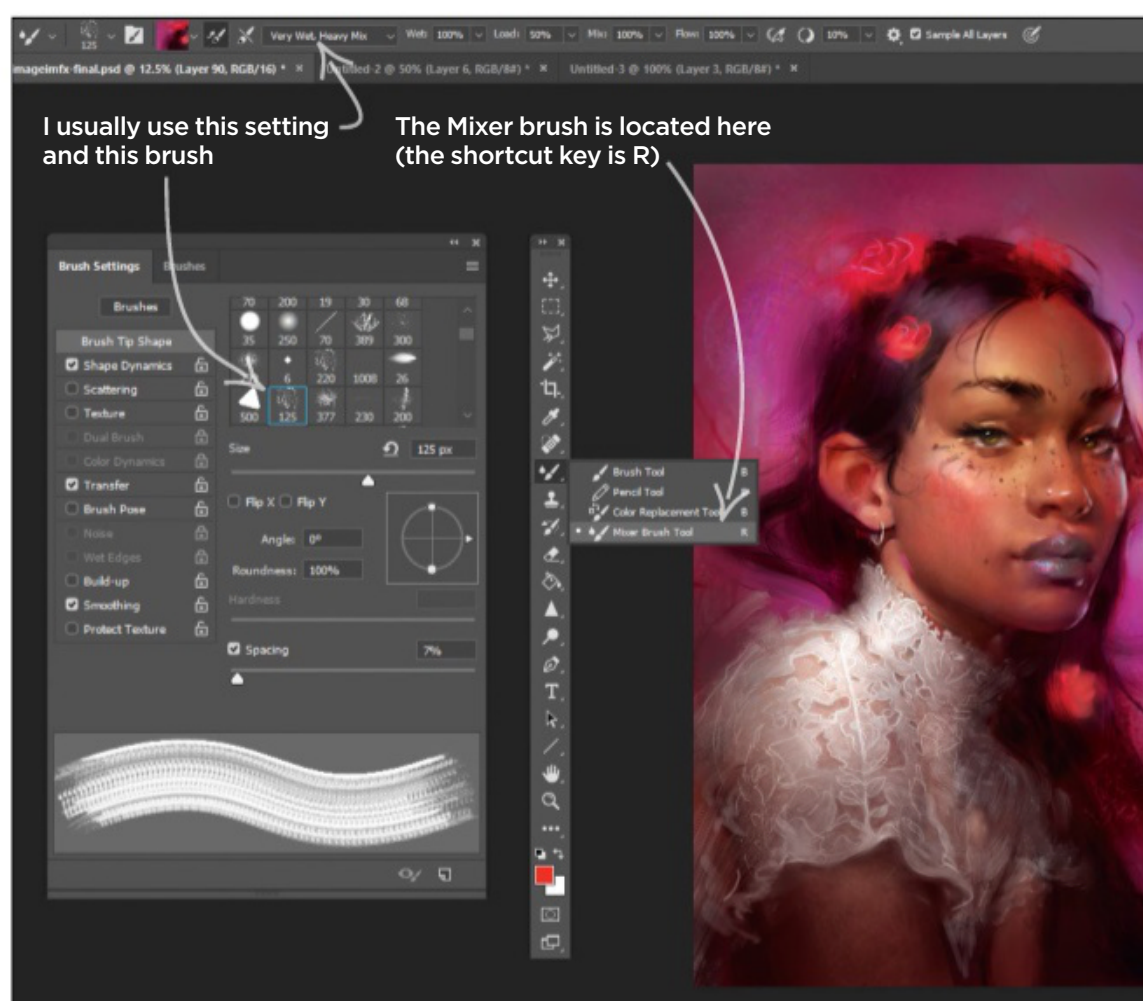
**125 MIXER/TEXTURED
BRUSH**

I use this for textured strokes as well as for my Mixer brush.



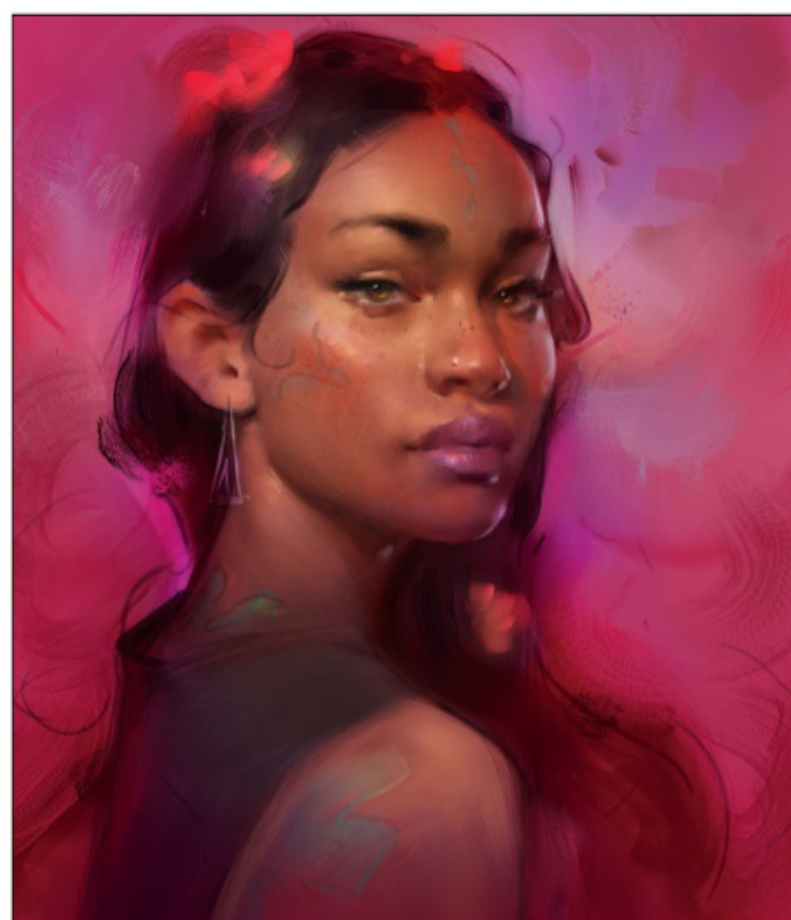
8 Painting with opaques

I notice that the colours are looking a little transparent from using my soft brush, so now I alternate between my favourite 125 brush and hard Round brush. I start painting over the figure using more opaque colours, trying to keep the values brightest on her right side of the face where I've now decided the light will be strongest.



9 Time for my favourite tool

I often use the Mixer brush in the later stages to soften edges and to generate expressive, painterly strokes. I use the tool with the #125 brush on the Very Wet/Heavy Mix to create these strokes. Experiment with the different dryness types on the brush – it can give you some pleasing, unexpected results!



10 Thumbnail readability

I realise my character isn't popping out from the background, so I work on boosting the brightness of her face using another adjustment layer. I add an edge light on the left side of her face and sharpen some edges around her eyes and hair to create contrast in the edges. Zoom out from your canvas regularly to check if your art reads well!



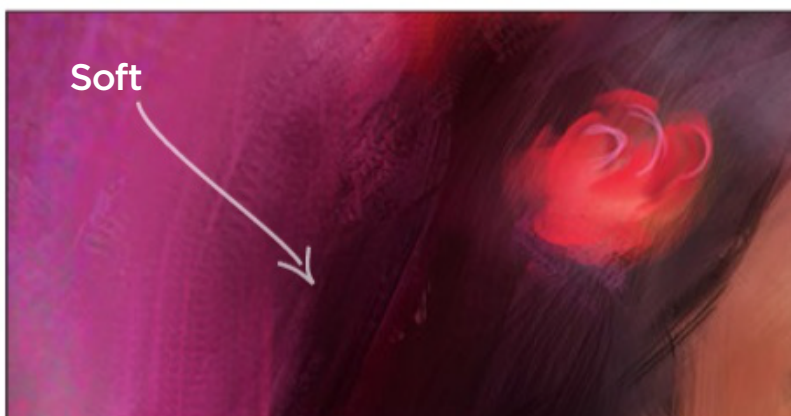
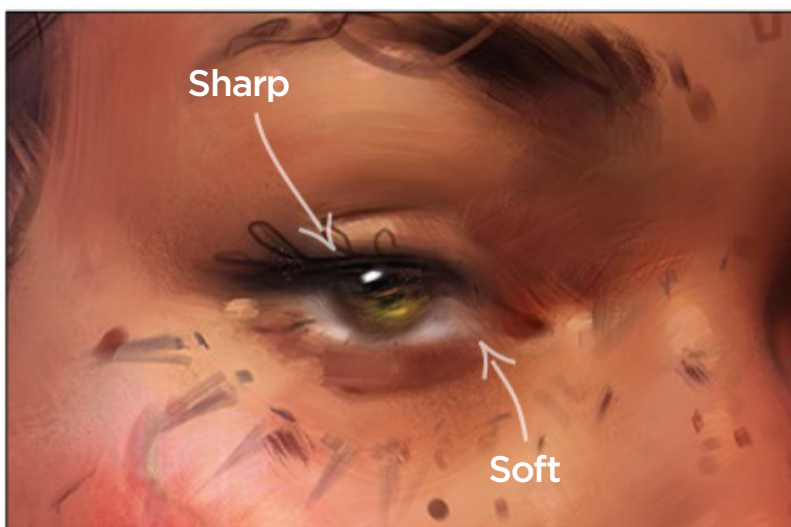
11 A big change

Straying away from the sketch is a little risky, but I need to because the pose looks a little stiff. I decide to create more gesture by tilting her shoulders and having them face a little more towards the viewer for a warmer presence. I think this helps a lot!



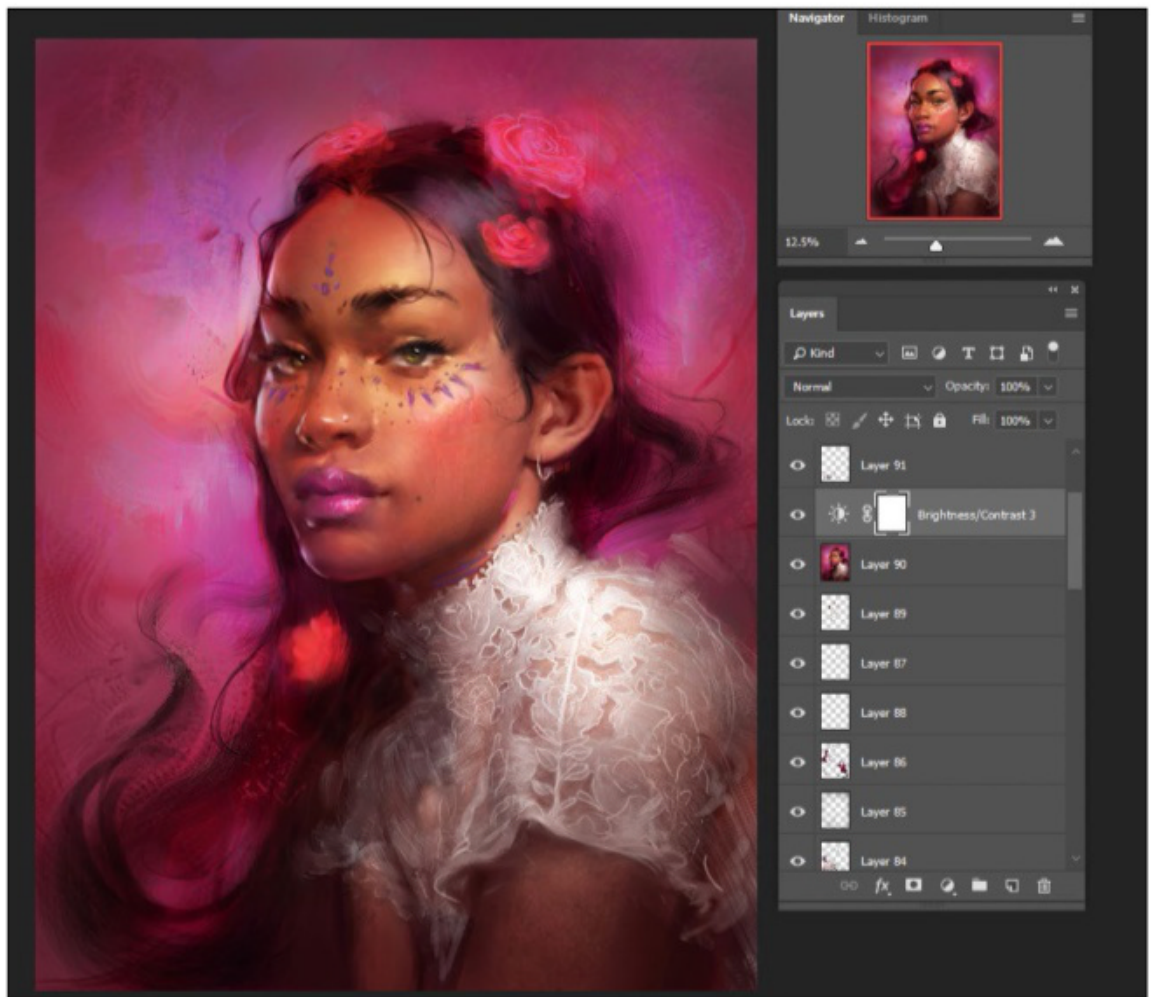
12 Sketching in the blouse

I reference some materials for the blouse and sketch it using my 125 textured brush, creating texture by following the shoulders' forms. The brush strokes help emphasise the forms they're flowing around. I keep it loose because the material is soft. I draw in some floral patterns, ensuring that any details are nearest the face.



13 Adjusting edges

Now that I'm nearing the end I can adjust some edges. I soften a lot of the sharper edges of the hair using the same Mixer brush settings. Sometimes I'll select the Sharpen tool from the toolbar menu and sharpen areas such as the character's eyes and lips.



14 Making the final edits

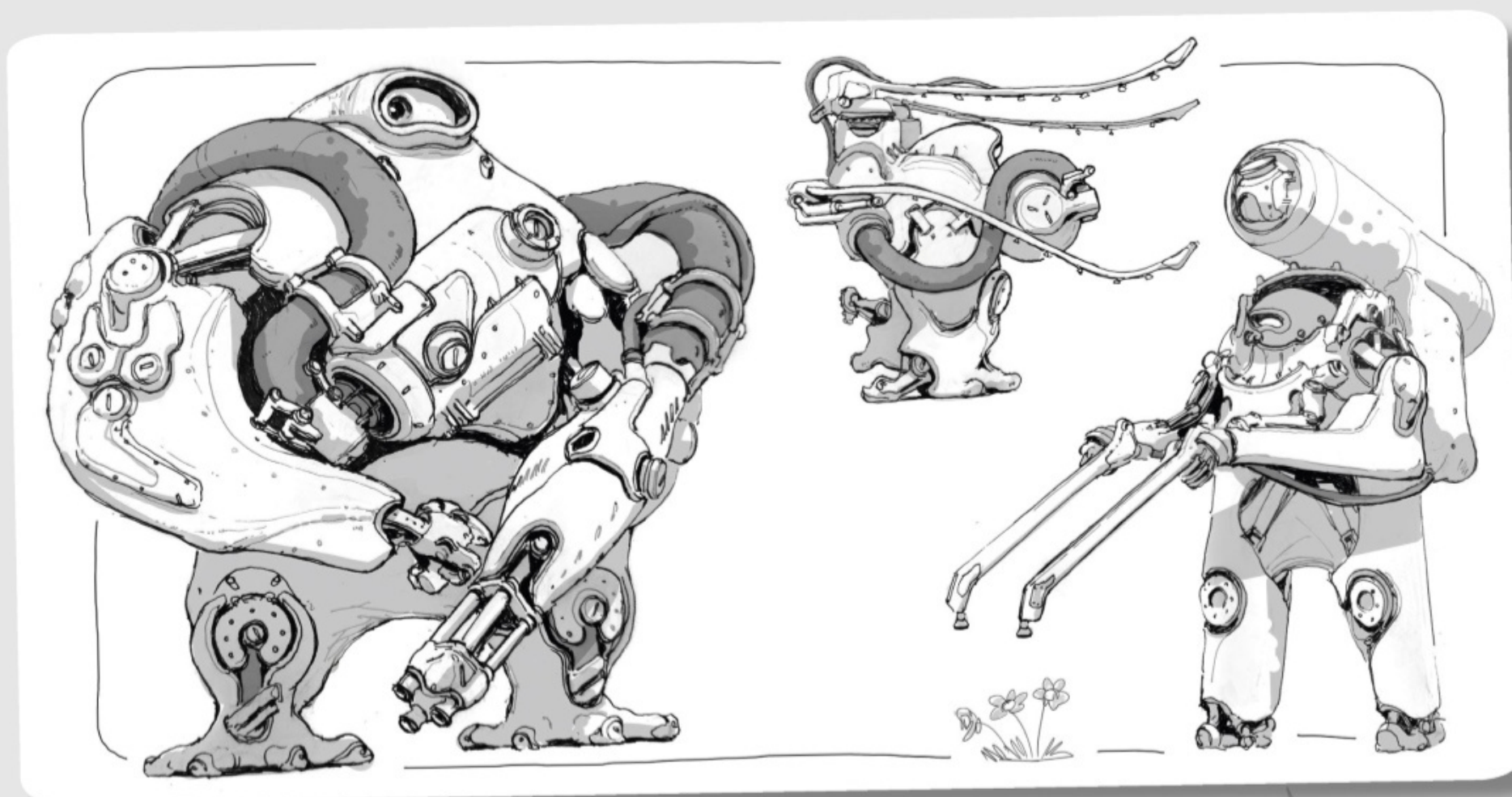
Finally, I look over the painting. I decide that I need to darken the edges of the canvas using a Multiple layer mode and brush in a warm dark colour with my Soft brush. I also boost the contrast of the whole piece using an adjustment layer. I'm very happy with the outcome of the piece and hope you enjoyed my workshop! 🌸

Next month

Next month in...
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX

Get into video games!

Learn all-new skills from master artists
working in the video games industry



All this... and more!

Character art for video games

Tancred Dyke-Wells goes through his creation of a boss game character.

Robh Ruppel interview

We delve into the ex-Naughty Dog artist's world to find out his inspirations.

ZBrush workshop

Concept artist Rob Brunette shows his creature design skills in ZBrush.

Sketchbook secrets

Splash Damage's Braydan Barrett lets us pore over his fantastic scribbles.

ISSUE 181 ON SALE IN THE UK 1 November 2019



Next month

We talk to Remedy
Entertainment
about the art
behind the video
game Control.

December 2019

ImagineFX



Photoshop CREATE A CARD ART PORTFOLIO

Illustrator **Noah Bradley** shares the fundamental principles for creating strong, dynamic and impactful artwork for card games





Artist PROFILE

Noah Bradley
LOCATION: US

Noah launched Art Camp, is working on The Sin of Man, and runs the Reference.Pictures website with his wife and fellow artist Rachel.
www.noahbradley.com

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 8 now!

PLUS 60 REFERENCE PHOTOS!



I've created art for card games for nine years and I want to show you how to make work for a card art portfolio.

Card art has unique challenges mostly to do with just how small the images appear. The art on many cards is just 2x1.5 inches! Most details are lost at that scale, while compositions easily become muddy and confused.

A painting that looks great at a larger size can lose all of its impact when reduced to just a couple inches.

With card art, the key thing to bear in mind is to start with strong, clear shapes and to maintain those as you finish the piece. If you begin with uncertain shapes or values, you're going to end up with a mess.

As you finish your work, you'll most likely need to use a lot of high-

quality reference. Choosing not to use reference is choosing to make worse art. Using reference is not "cheating" – it's just the way illustration should be done. Most of the top illustrators use a ton of reference for their paintings, even if they don't talk about it. So get rid of any silly notions of only working from imagination, and start using more reference to make better work.

1 Read the brief! Then read it again!

Card art has a purpose. It has to convey the appearance of a character, a specific action or object, or a location within the universe of the game's setting (and sometimes all of these things at the same time). Make sure you understand what you're being asked to paint.

Title: Princess of the Sun

Size: 444x300mm (to be printed at 44x30mm)

Due date: November 16

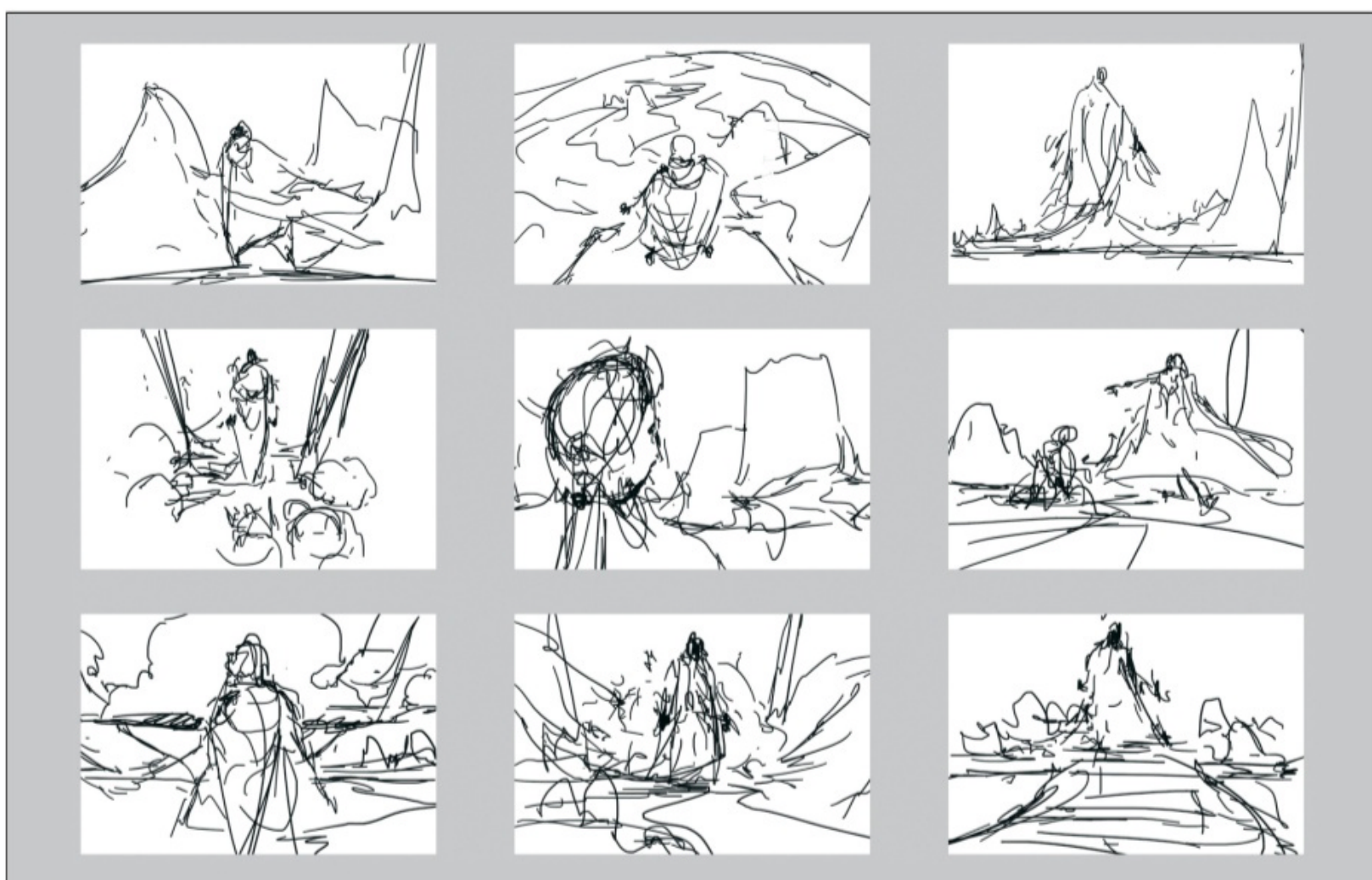
Art Description: A beautiful princess, surveying her domains. Wearing a long, flowing dress or gown of some sort. Her connection to the world around her is a vital part of her power in the game.

Setting: A natural environment with a sweeping vista stretching out behind the main figure.



2 Produce thumbnails

Thumbnails are less about making pretty pictures and more about thinking well. My thumbnails are a bit confusing for other people to look at, but they help me to imagine a whole image before I invest the time into sketching and painting it. I take the time to dump my ideas on to the page and see how they hold up in reality.



3 More ideas makes for better images

Make at least nine thumbnails for every image you finish. Sometimes when I mentor students I make them go as far as 50 or even 100 thumbnails for one piece! When they do it, they often produce better compositions than they knew they were capable of. So don't be scared of bad ideas; just keep having ideas until you find some good ones.

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES:
OIL CANVAS 2

ROUND

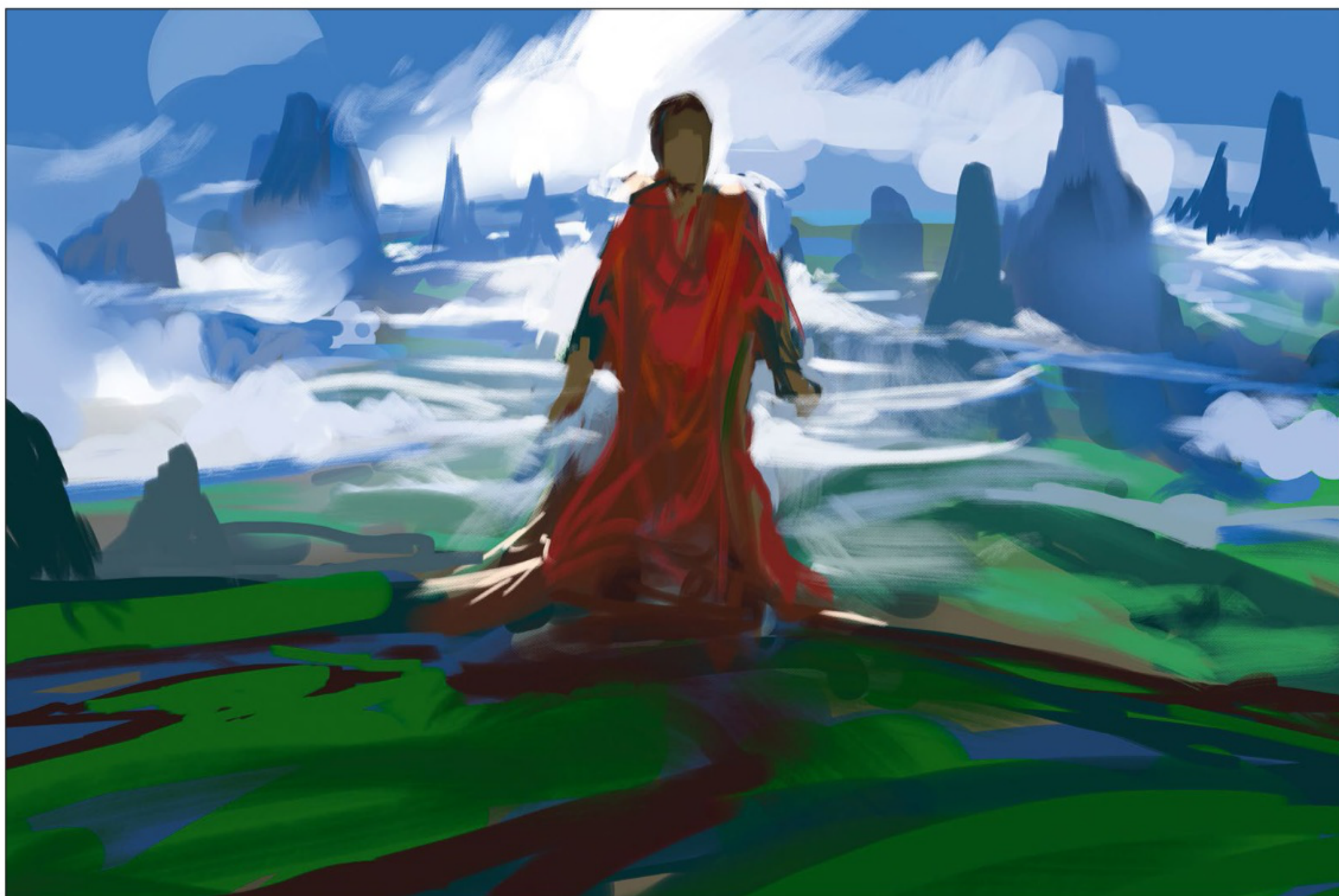
SOFT ROUND

HARDSOFT

HARDSOFT FLIPPED

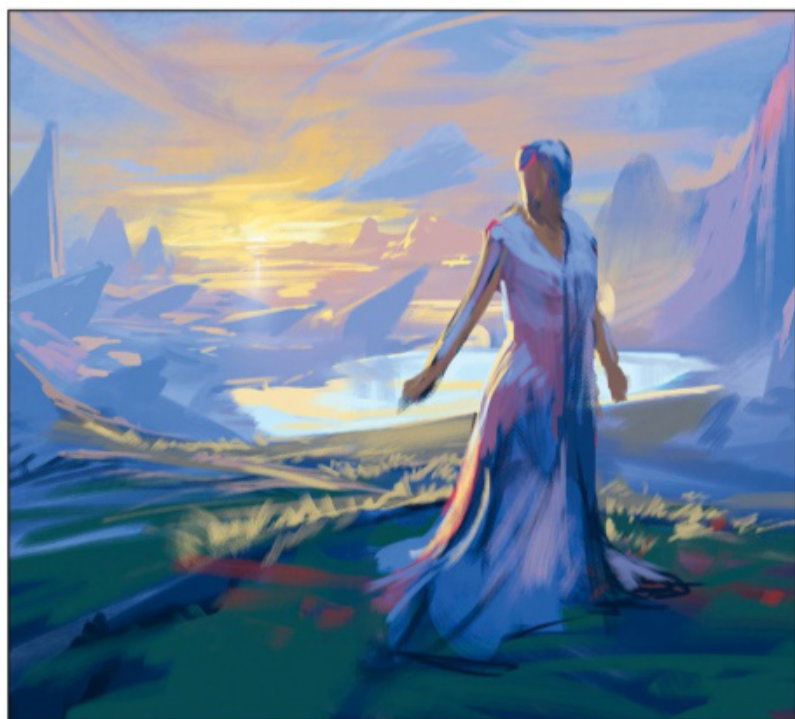
SUPERDOT

I try to keep my brushes pretty simple. One brush for textured marks, then variations on the Round brush. Keep it simple!



4 Make at least two sketches

It's so easy to settle with the first sketch you do, but don't give in to the temptation so easily! You'll often find the second or third attempt at a sketch is stronger than the first. And if you do go with the first sketch, at least you'll know it's the best option once you've done more sketches.



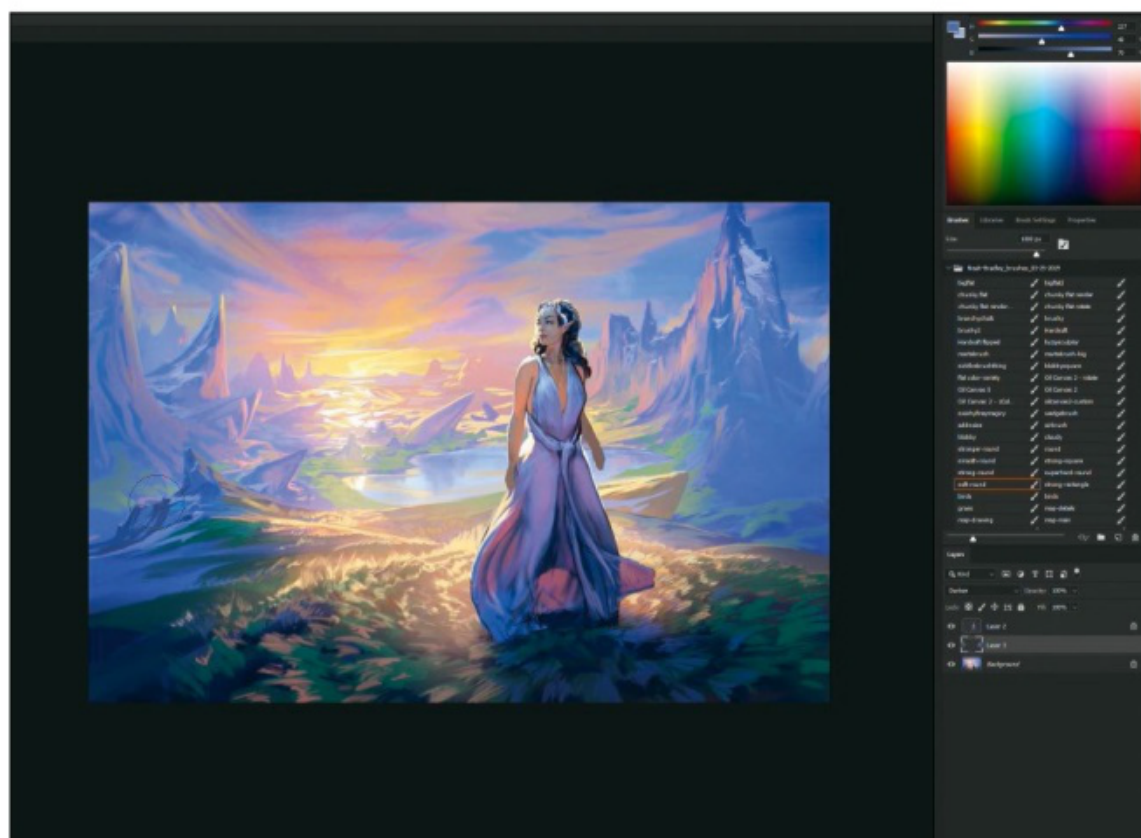
5 Make the action fit the storytelling

Card art often shows dynamic action, but it doesn't always have to. The approach you take depends on the purpose of the card. In this case, we want a more peaceful moment. But if you're keen to build up a whole portfolio of card art then it might be good to show that you can handle action-packed scenes, too.



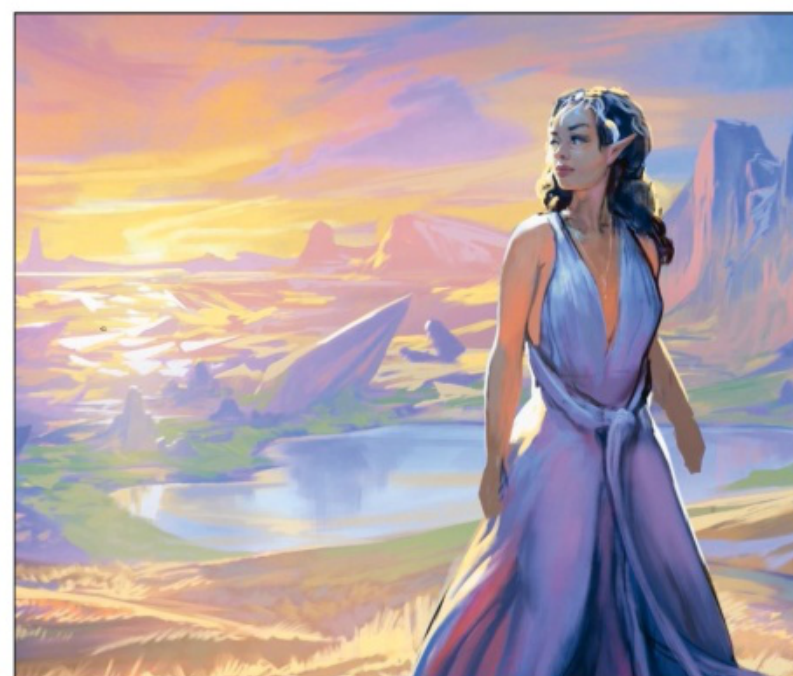
6 Think in silhouettes

A good piece of card art can be reduced to silhouettes and still read clearly. When you're posing your characters or showing an environment, look at just the silhouette and ask yourself if it's still clear what's happening. If it's not, fix it! Confusing card art is not good card art. ➡➡



7 Zoom out and check your progress

A piece might look great on a 30-inch monitor, but less so on a little 2-inch wide card. It can help to open a second window in Photoshop of your image and keep it zoomed out very small (the Navigator window can also serve this purpose). This will keep you from getting too far off track with your image.



8 Colours and lighting are tools to convey mood and story

The colour scheme and lighting in your piece should not be an afterthought. Lighting is a tool for storytelling and the mood of your piece hinges on its colour palette. It's all interconnected and should be considered early in the process. For inspiration and guidance, look at the work of other artists as well as films. There's a lot to be learned by first imitating others.



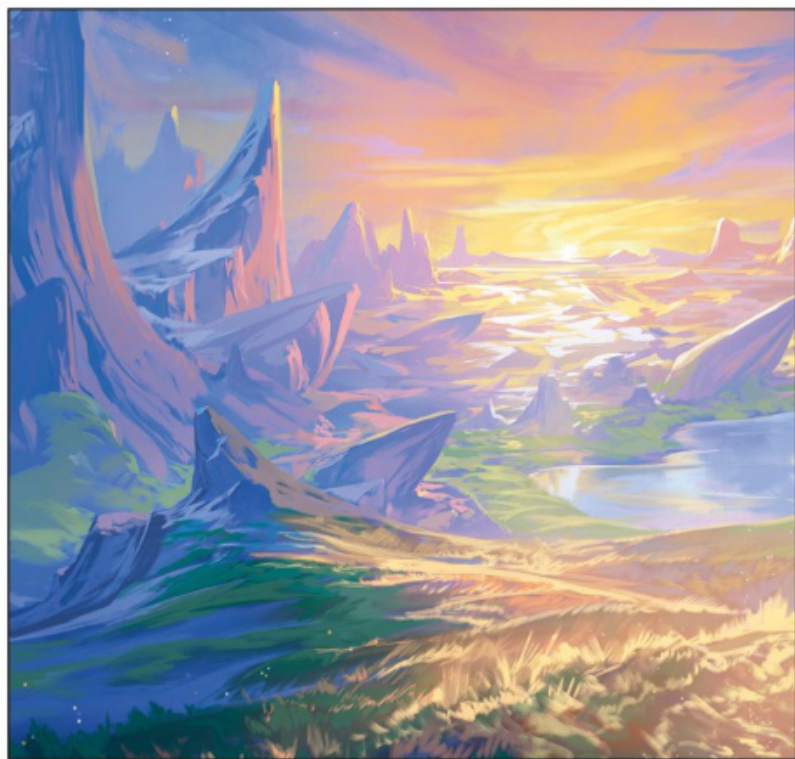
9 Check your work in greyscale

Colour is important, of course, but values are king. Hue and saturation are necessary for constructing a good image, but they're built on the foundation of strong values. Keep your lights light and your darks dark, and never mix those up. Keep your values simple. Set a colour-proofing mode to greyscale (View>Proof Setup>Custom): this will enable you check yourself throughout the process.



10 Get reference! Shoot your own or download good stuff

This is the most frequent advice I give to artists. And it's the one that so many people ignore. Getting and using reference is not hard to do, but it's very easy to put off indefinitely. Don't! Get. Good. Reference. My wife and I make reference for artists at www.reference.pictures that you can check out – it's affordable and high quality. You can also shoot your own. Lean your phone up, put on a timer and run to the other side of the room. It's infinitely better than no reference at all.



11 Don't neglect the environment

Forgoing backgrounds has its place in art, but that place is rarely in card art. The environment gives characters a sense of place and shows players of the game a glimpse of the world they occupy. If you struggle with environments, try starting with the setting before you render the main character. It's like saving dessert for last.



12 Work in big shapes, but don't be lazy

There's no excuse for lazy rendering. Sure, your piece might be seen small, but you don't want it to look awful when it's seen larger. So don't rely on the small scale to get you out of the hard work of finishing your piece. Sloppiness doesn't have any place in art. A painterly approach is perfectly valid, but laziness always stands out.



13 Use Lighten layers to help achieve glow and atmosphere

Take a soft Airbrush on a layer set to the Lighten blending mode and gently brush in some light, saturated colours. This is my favourite trick for introducing that bit of extra glow and pop to an image. I also use this when I've realised that I made the background too contrast-y and need to tone it down a little.



14 Obtain feedback and listen to it

Part of working on card art is working closely with an art director to make the strongest image you can. When you're developing a portfolio, it's important to get used to accepting feedback and applying changes. Show it to a trusted friend (and possibly fellow artist) who can help to spot things that you would miss. ●

Core Skills: Part 3

ADD DEPTH USING KRITA'S FILTERS

Continuing her series on the free painting program, **Sara Tepes** reveals how Krita's filter tools can help to make a piece stand out on the canvas

Artist PROFILE

Sara Tepes
LOCATION: US

Sara is an illustrator who works with both digital and traditional mediums, and enjoys making YouTube videos teaching on various art topics. www.sarucatepes.com

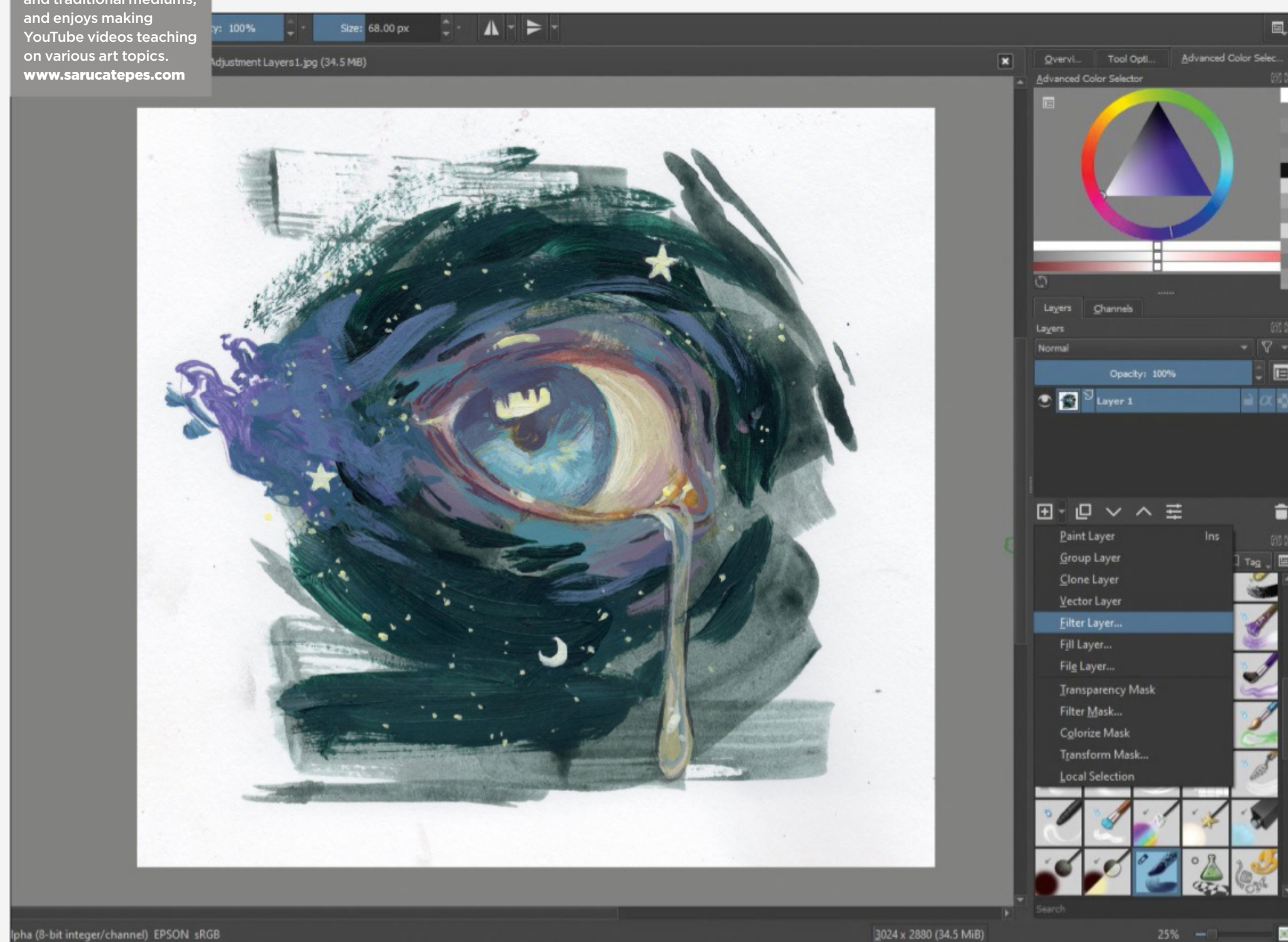


Choosing the correct colours for a painting can be challenging, and if the tones of your piece don't come together, it might not look finalised.

Adding filter layers to your work can help you easily add the depth and vibrancy you were looking for to bring the image together.

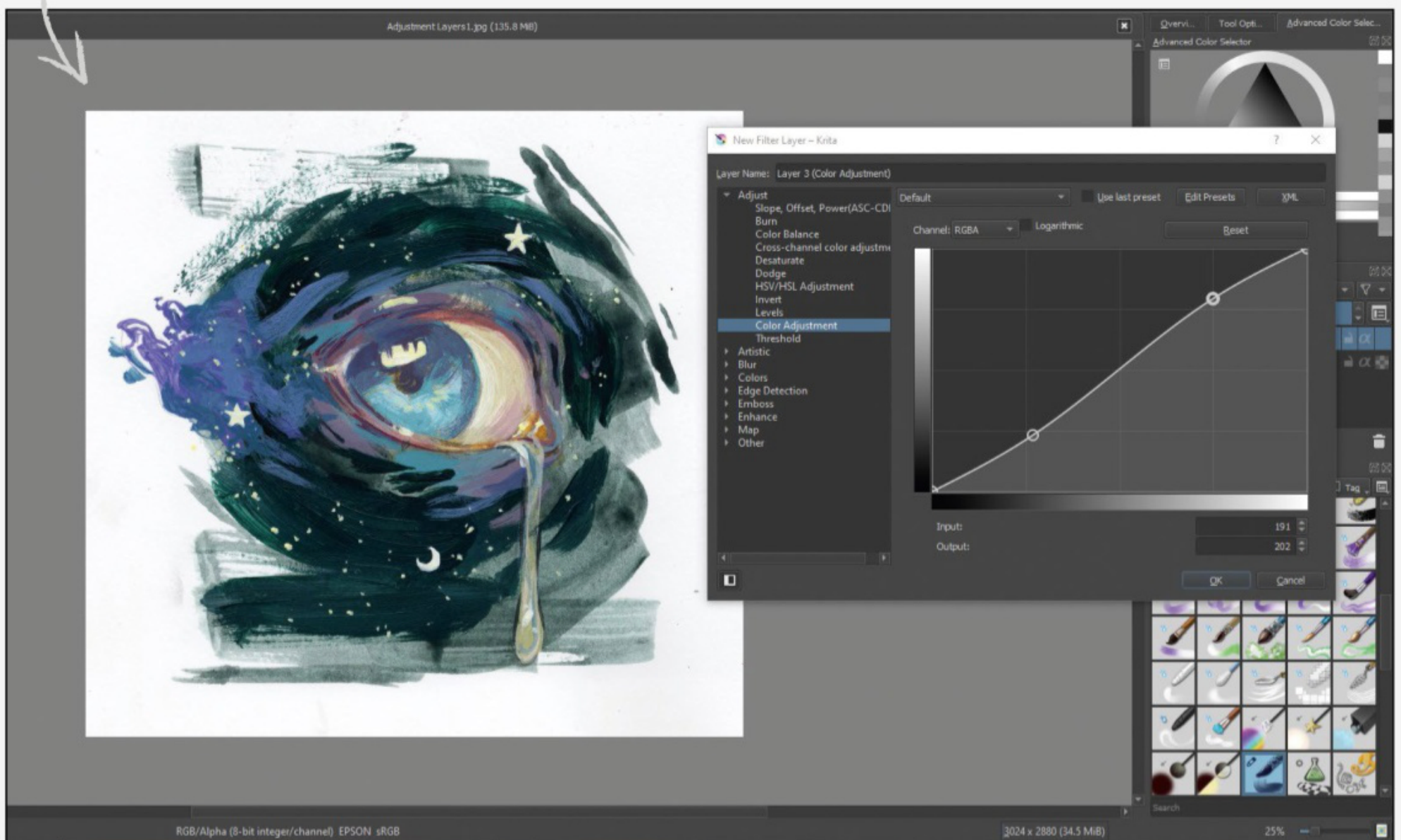
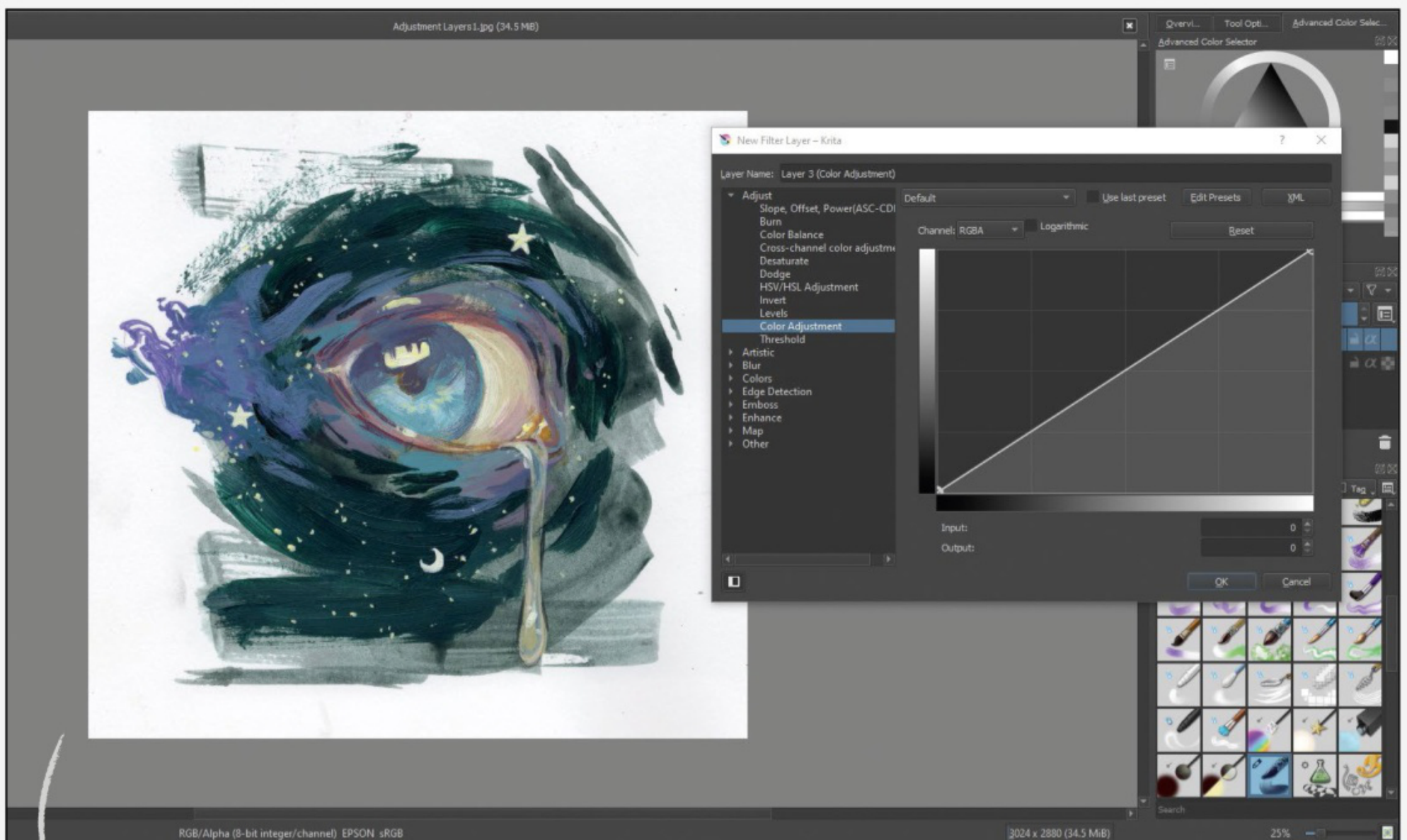
Krita provides a vast amount of filter and adjustment layers, and I'm

going to focus on the three that I use most often. I recommend starting off with these and then spend time exploring the rest of the filters. They'll enable you to add a whole range of effects to your art!



1 Import your art into Krita

For this exercise, you can use either a digital painting that needs a pop or a traditional media piece that you scanned in and want to finalise. Here I'm using an acrylic painting that I scanned; my goal is to deepen the darks and add more vivid tones before I export the final image.



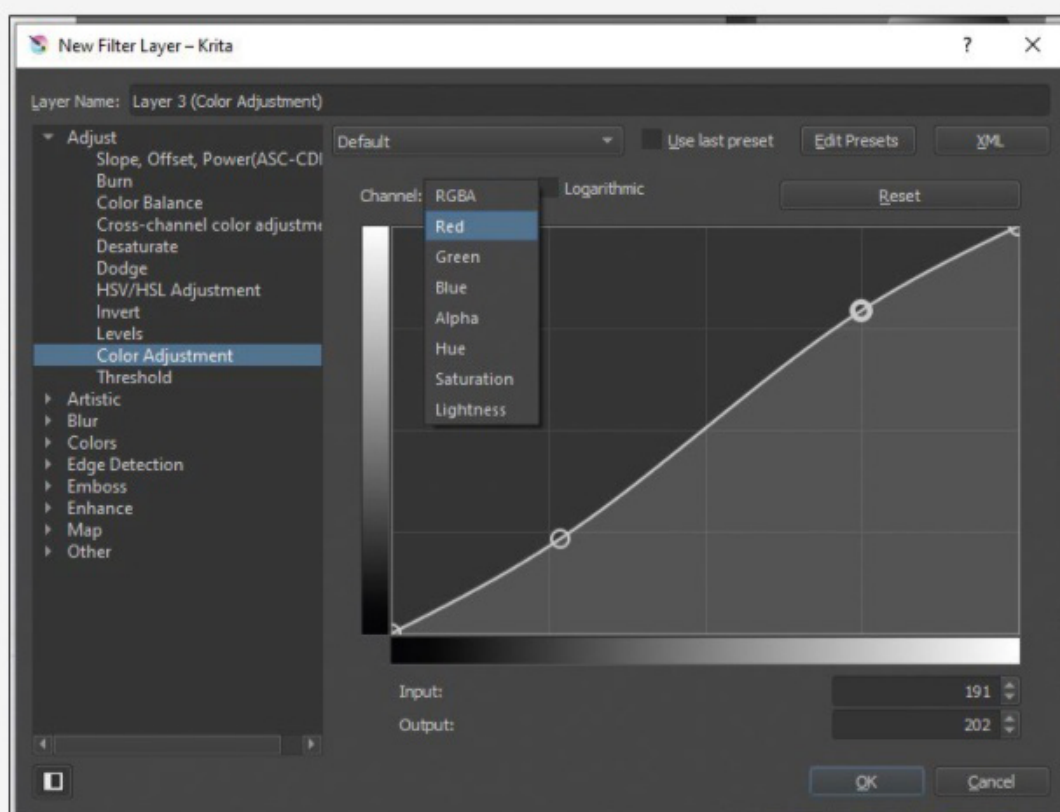
2 Alter brightness and contrast with the Color Adjustment curves

In the Layers panel, press the Filter Layer button and select Color Adjustment curves. The RGBA channel enables you to adjust the brightness and contrast of your image, so play around with the curves until you're satisfied with the contrast. My curve usually looks like a very soft 'S'. ➡

Workshops

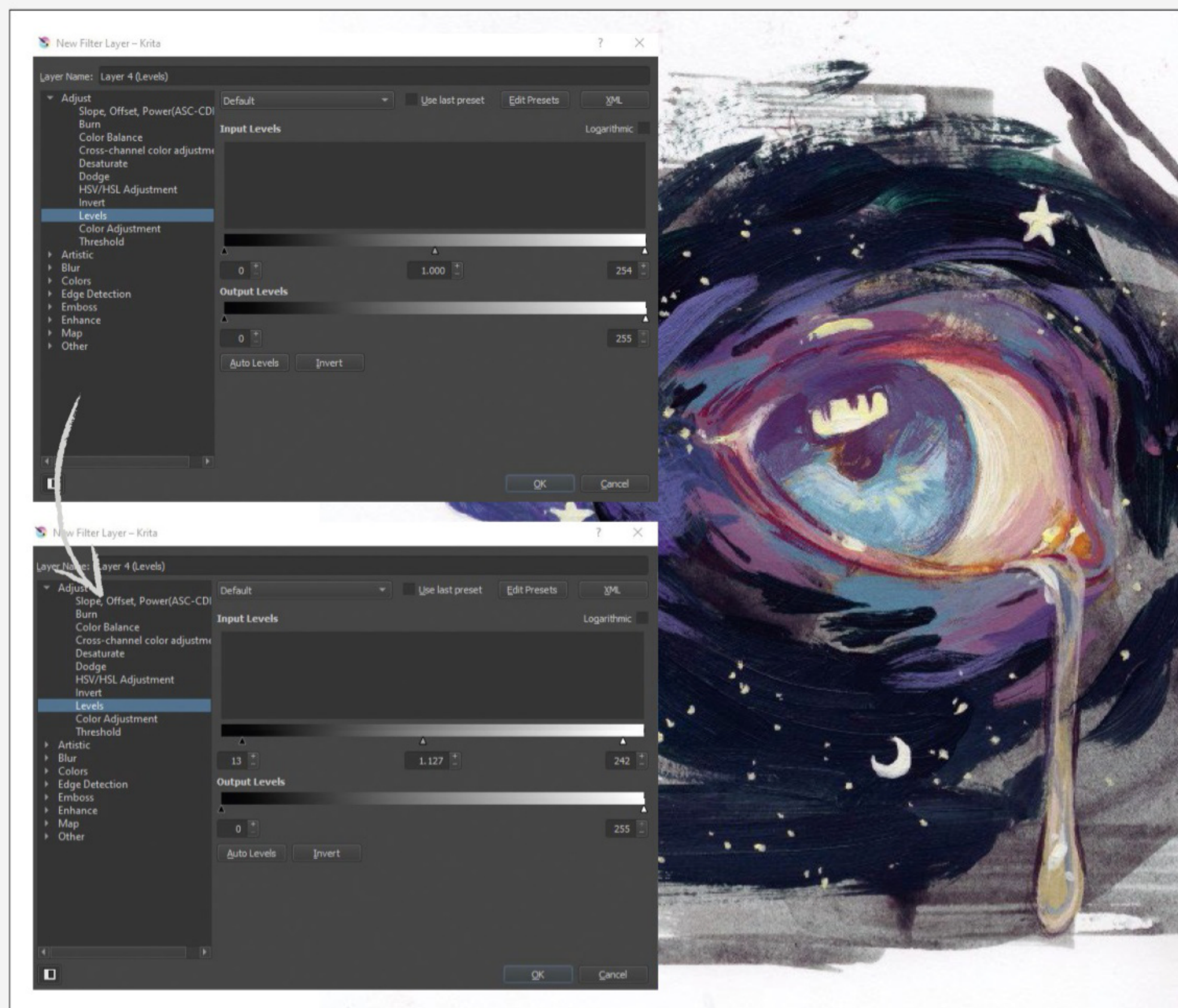
3 Adjusting the colours

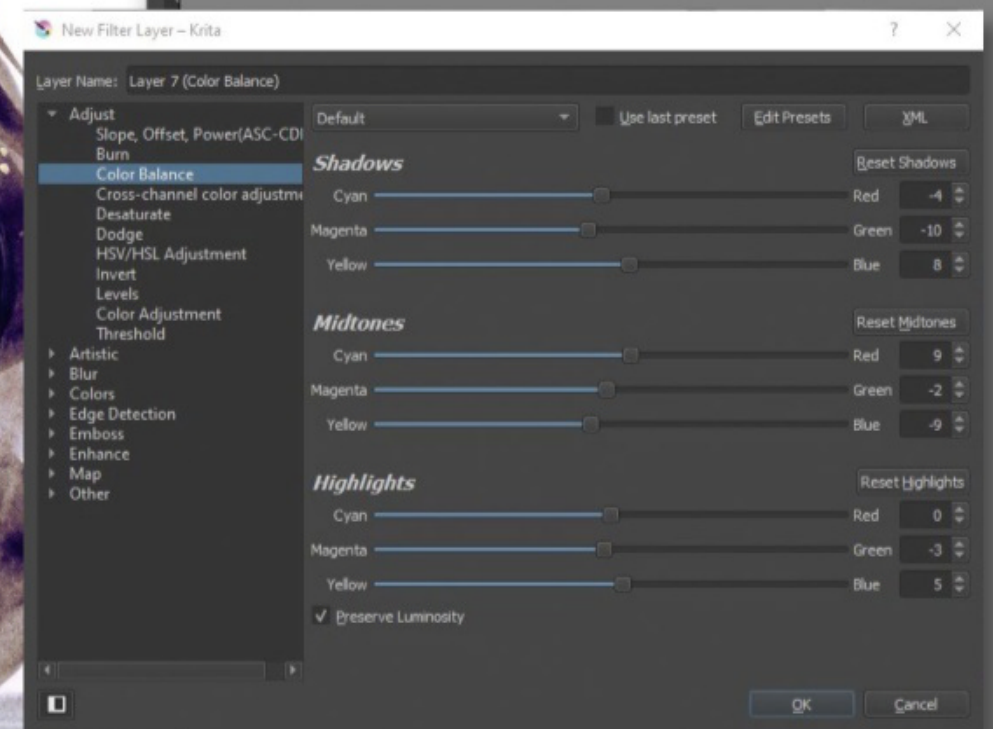
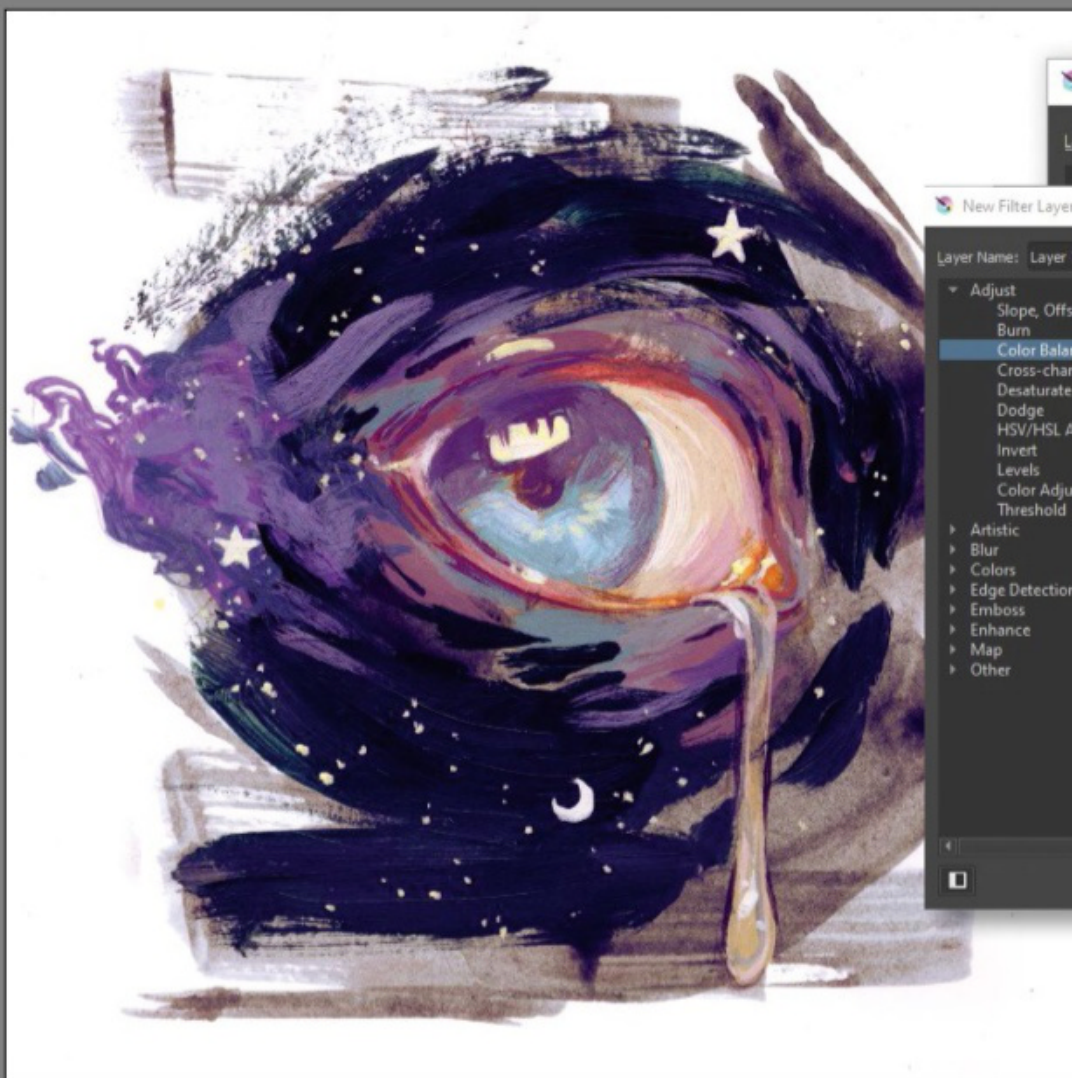
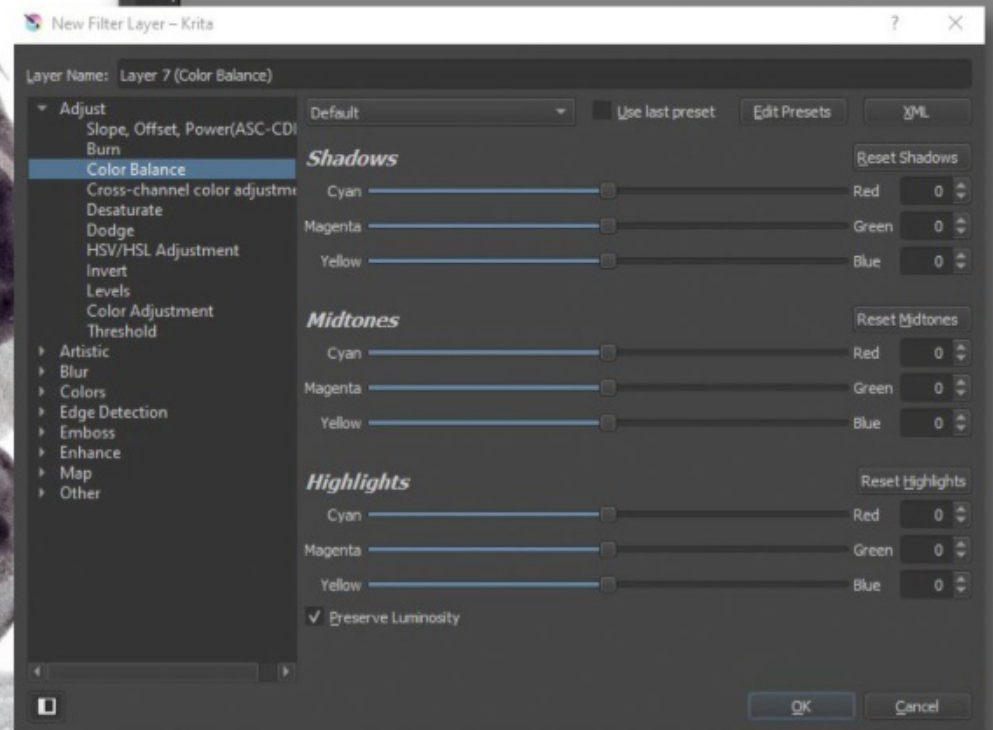
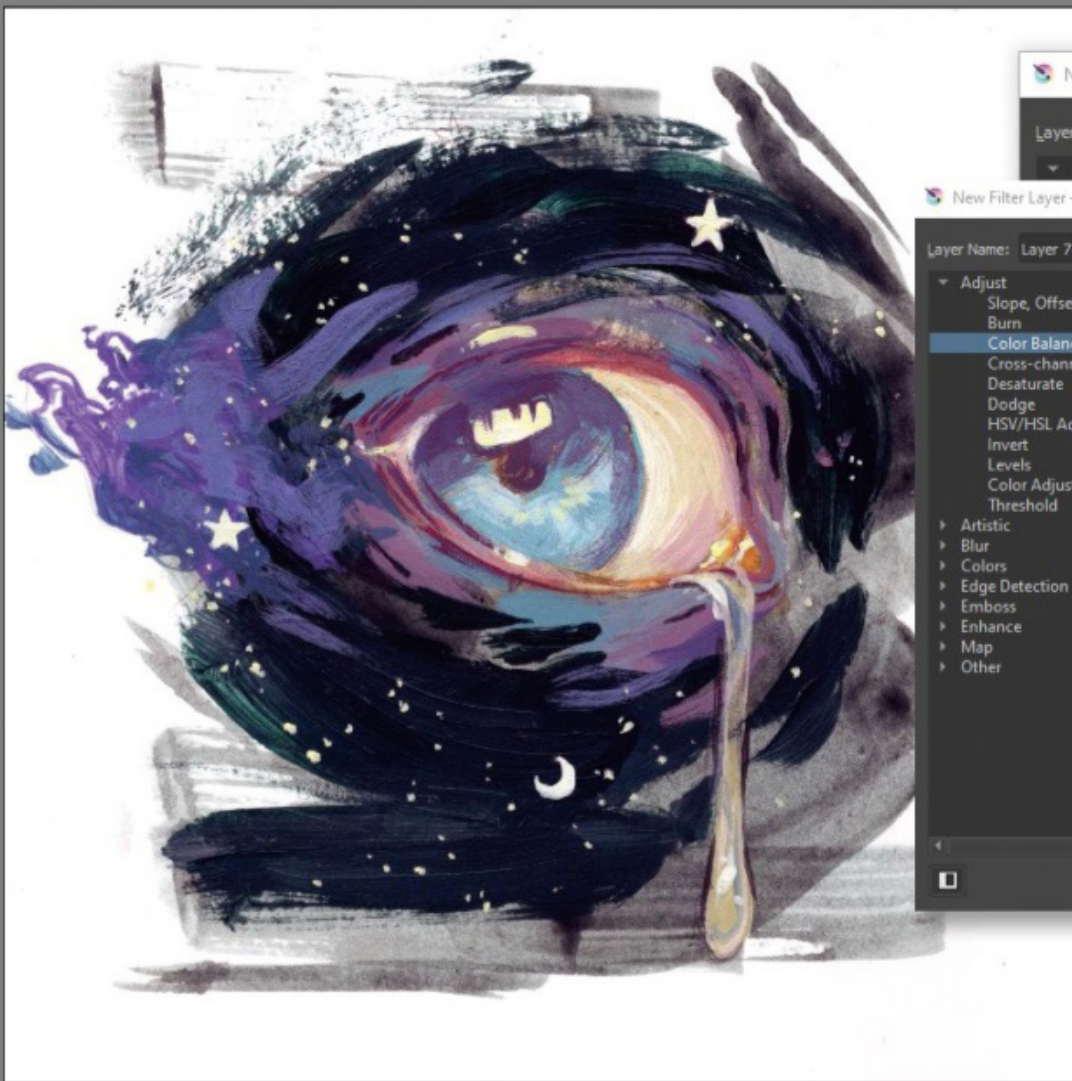
If you click the Channel drop-down, you'll see a couple more options. You can use the Red, Green and Blue curves to tweak and refine the colours in your piece. Make small adjustments to the curve and you'll notice how each colour affects the tones. The bottom left of each curve alters the darks, while the upper right adjusts the lights.



4 Using the Levels filter layer

The Levels filter is useful for bringing out true whites and blacks in a piece. It also gives you more control over the final contrast and brightness results, compared to using the individual Brightness and Contrast sliders. The left slider controls blacks, the right controls the whites, and the middle slider controls the mid-tones. I use Levels when I'm editing a scanned piece, or when working on a sticker design and need the background to be pure white to turn into an alpha channel.





5 Take control of your colours with the Color Balance layer

Finally, if you want to specifically alter tones and colours in your piece, the Color Balance filter gives you the most control. You can adjust the magenta, cyan and yellow tones of each of the shadows, mid-tones and highlights. This is useful if, for example, you want to change the tones of the darks without affecting the mid-tones or highlights.

Photoshop

UNIQUE WAYS TO CREATE PORTRAITS

Jenn Ravenna encourages you to free yourself from the daily grind of methodical techniques and try out new approaches in your personal art

Artist PROFILE

Jenn Ravenna
LOCATION: US

Jenn is a concept artist, illustrator, photographer, and aspiring cinematographer. She loves creating fantastical words and narrative storytelling through compelling imagery.
www.jennravenna.com



This workshop will look at the process of pure exploration in personal work. When talking to my peers, we often lament on how difficult it is to find the time to explore our own work and process. It seems like we never do enough of it.

Every day we're bombarded with dozens of tasks we're expected to do as artists. These range from paid-for work and participating in challenges, to working on our portfolios and

honing our skills by doing studies. And with social media constantly tempting us with a new hot trend, it can be hard to find the time to let our minds wander on the canvas.

I believe it's healthy to let your imagination breathe a little bit and let yourself explore with no purpose. With patience and time, sometimes this is where artists can find their voice, discover a new technique, or even find a new medium they enjoy.

I didn't have a plan going into the sketch, but the end result was an

interesting peek into my subconscious and a good style exercise. The portrait ended up being a symbolic representation of some personal feelings I've had over the past year. The Chinese porcelain represents my own fragility and heritage, the florals represent growth and a love for tattoo design, the makeup relates to being a bisexual woman and being able to explore that identity this year. Exploring your art means also discovering yourself, and that's pretty cool.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

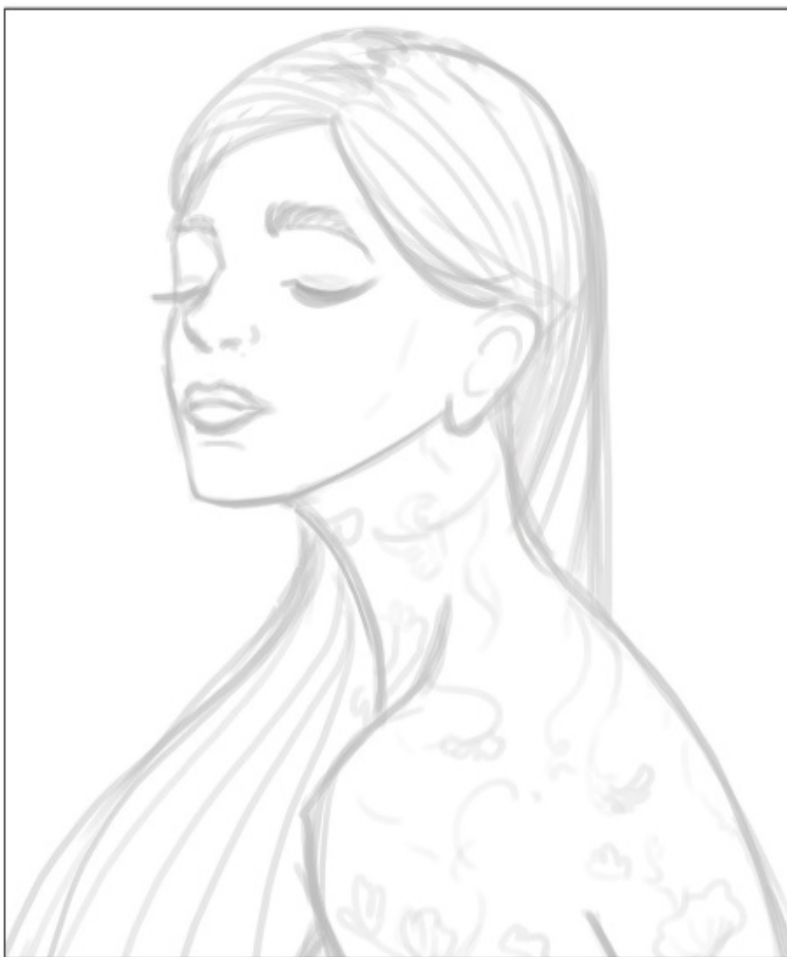
PHOTOSHOP

DEFAULT BRUSHES:
SOFT ROUND BRUSH

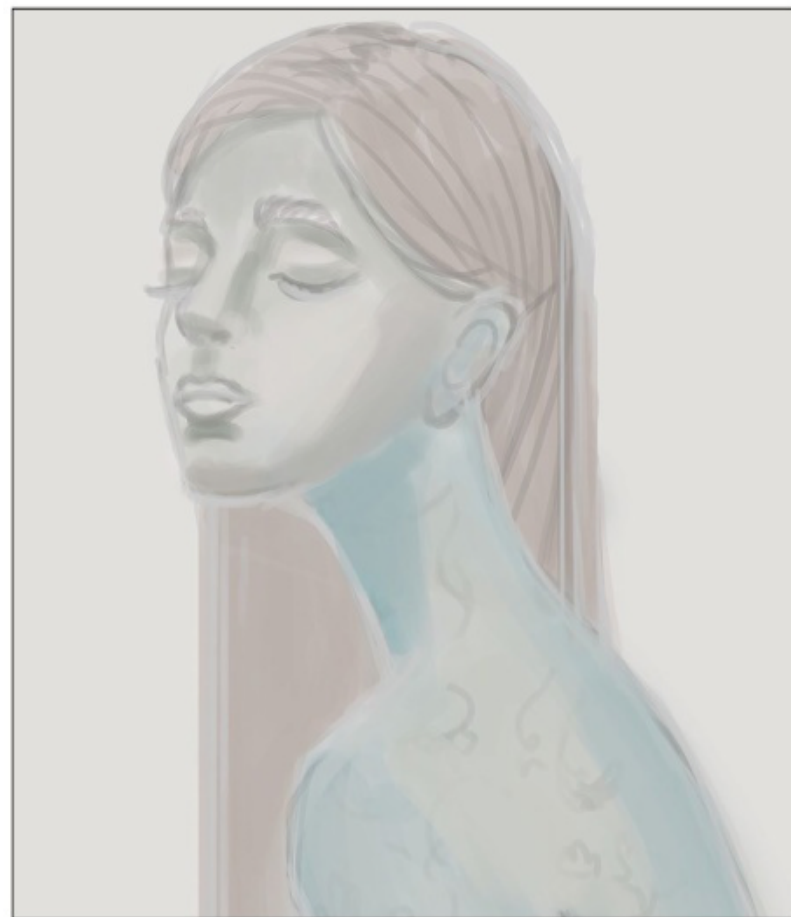
For quickly establishing values, rendering, and producing soft shadows.

HARD ROUND BRUSH

For edge control, carving out graphic shapes, and painting hard highlights.



1 Create a loose sketch
When sitting down and starting a personal portrait, I like to begin with a super low-commitment sketch. It's simple, and it's just for the gesture and pose. It doesn't have to be the prettiest sketch. To this very day I have a difficult time drawing from imagination, so I make sure to find a good reference image when I start.



2 Introduce loose flat colour
An important part of the exploratory process is laying down some kind of colour scheme as fast as possible, because it sets the mood and tone for the image. At this point I know I want the figure to be made of Chinese porcelain – a symbolic element. I also think it would be fun to paint a shiny material in a high-key lighting situation, so I keep the palette light. ➡

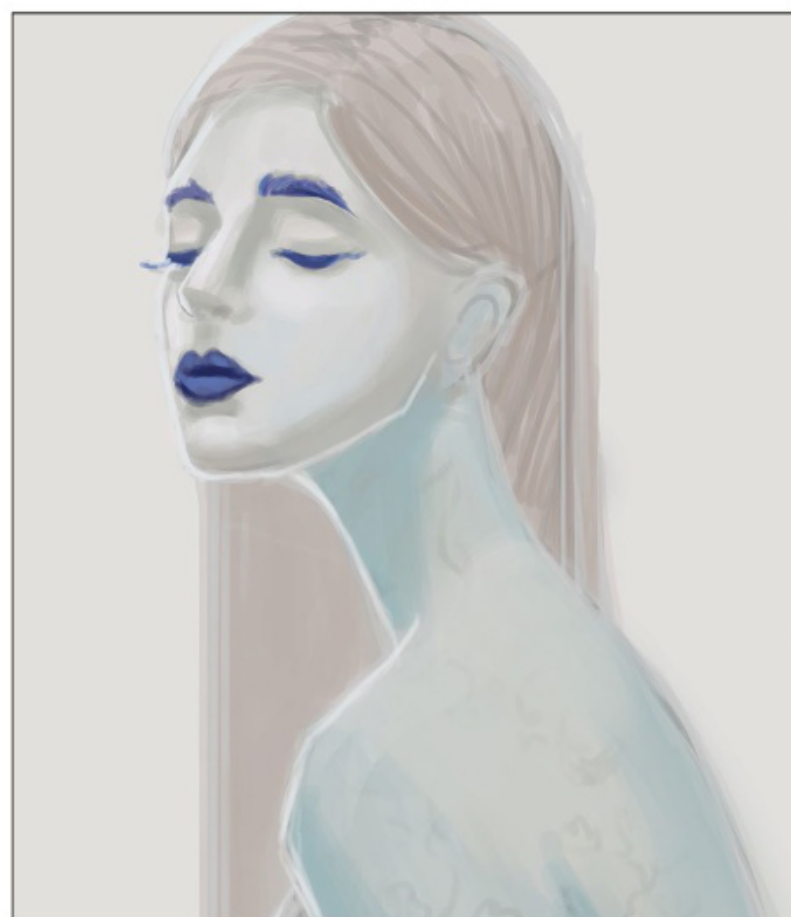
In depth Unique portraits





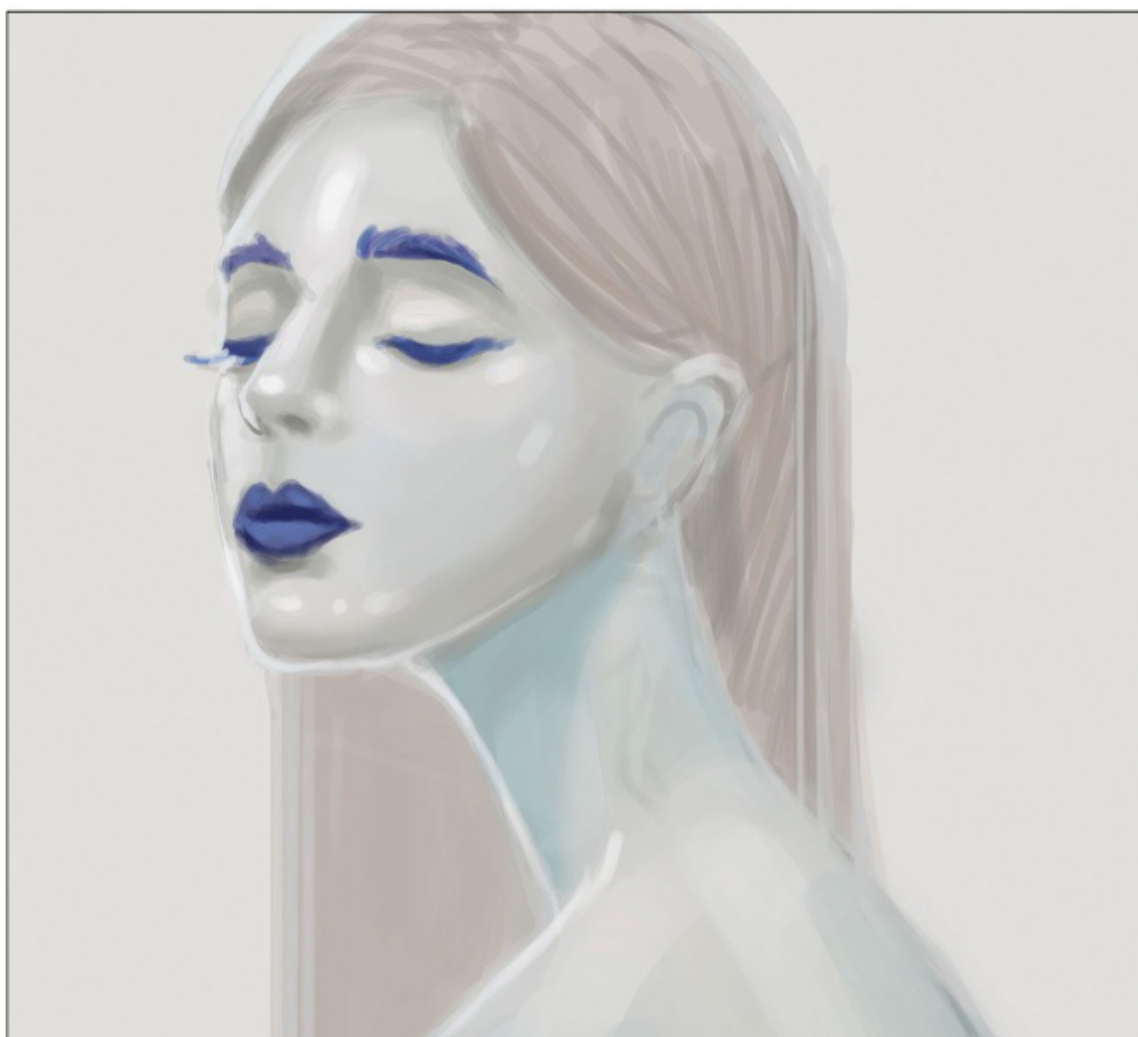
3 Establish my values

To help things go faster both in my personal and professional work, I like to establish a loose value structure quickly with the soft Round brush. This isn't the prettiest stage of the image, but I think it's important to show. Every artist goes through an "ugly" stage of a painting.



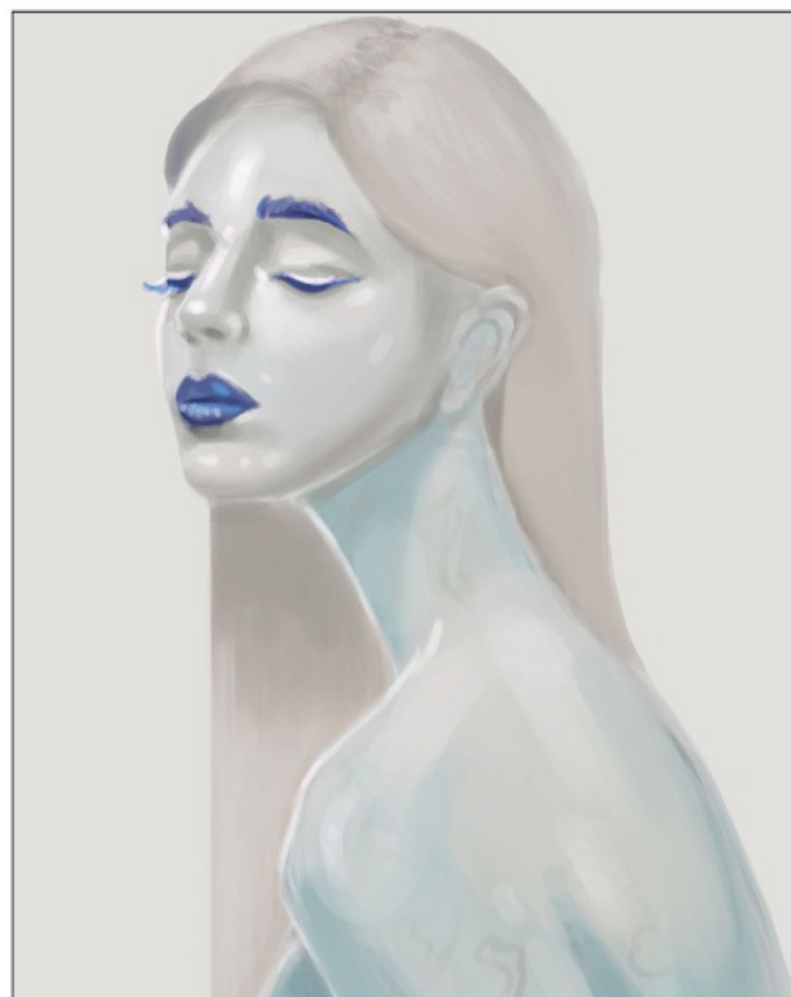
4 Explore colour and sculpting

Since I'm not strictly adhering to a line drawing, at this stage I start "sculpting" the figure and shape of the image by adding more definition to the anatomy and working on the silhouette of the shape. I've also been watching a lot of drag shows lately, so I thought it would be fun to do more expressive makeup.



5 Experiment with materials

I want the figure to feel fragile, made of porcelain and am keen to paint something other than human skin for a change. This is where I start exploring materials. I look up reference for Chinese porcelain vases and study the way the material handles light and shadow, then incorporate this into the image.



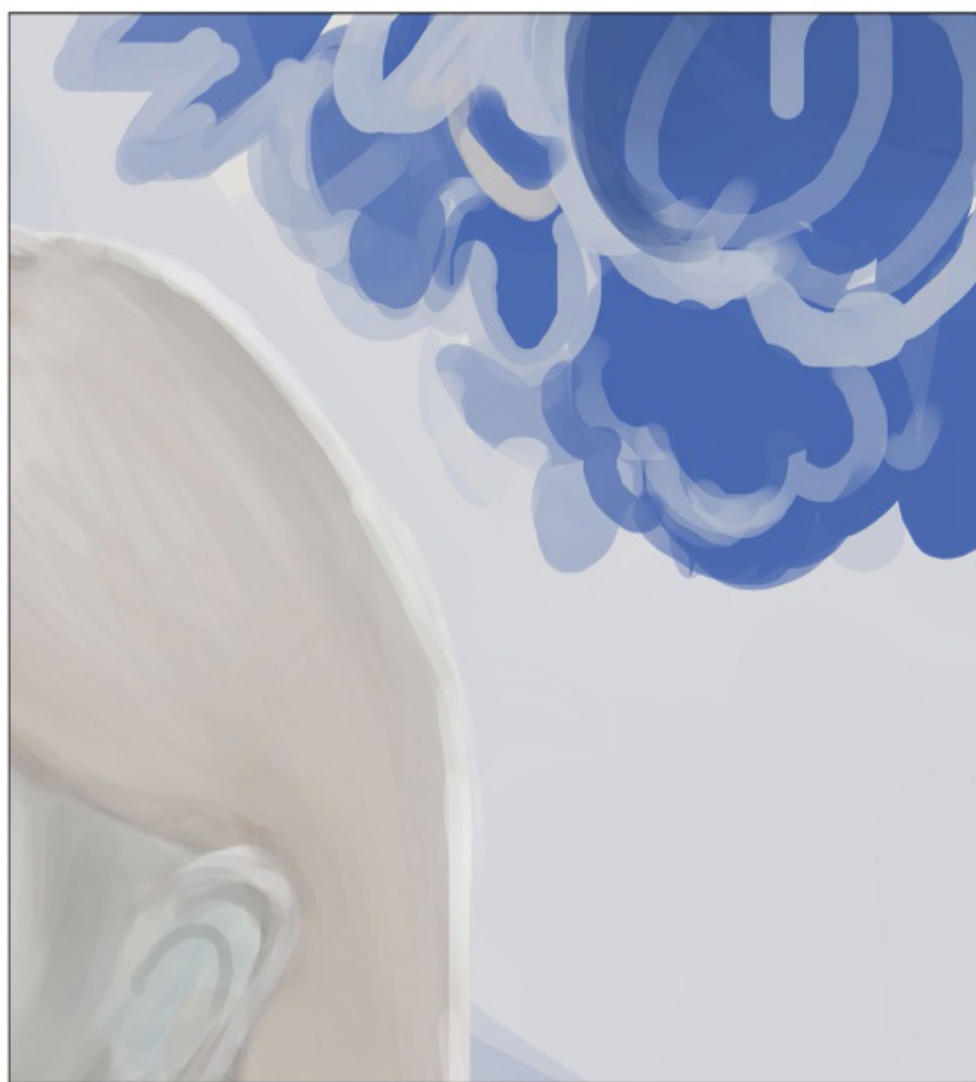
6 Follow the fun

I'm having fun trying to replicate porcelain material on a human face, so I continue rendering this part to match the reference photo. It's an expressive and fun effect, so I want to chase that joy – even if it isn't the most efficient process-wise.



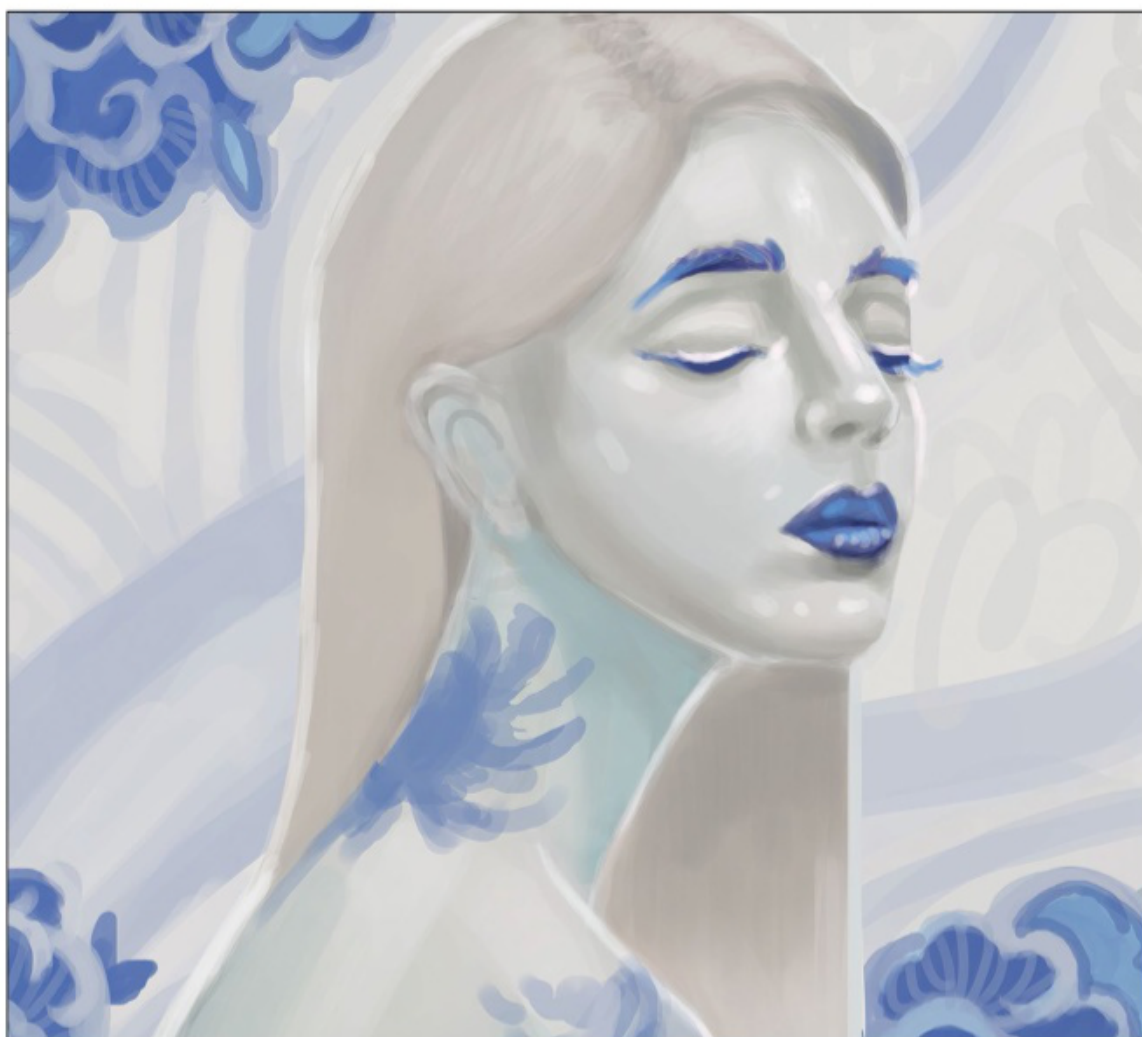
7 Add interesting texture and patterns

What do you do when you're not doing art? It's always important to experience life outside of your craft so you can bring ideas back to your work. Floral patterns inspired by nature has always been an influence of mine: they're aesthetically pleasing and bring an optimistic mood to an otherwise sombre image. Adding interesting textures and patterns can, in turn, make an image more engaging. ➡➡



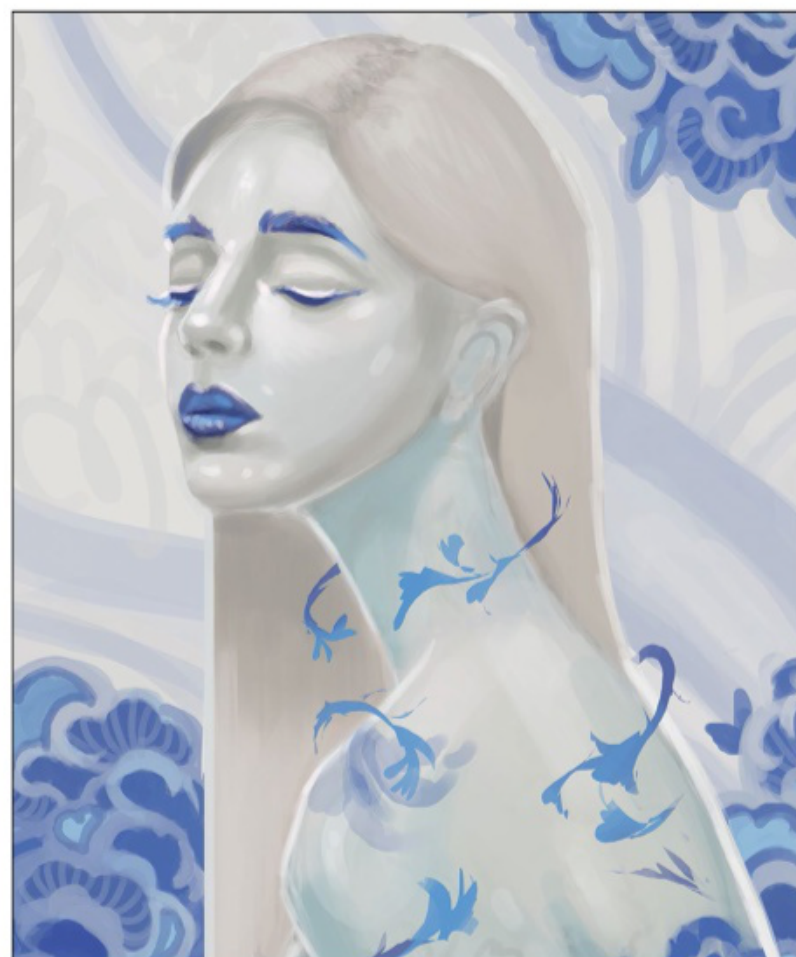
8 Composing a background that suits the story

For portraits, a background doesn't always have to be plain. Sometimes it can add to the story of the subject you're trying to portray. It can also change the image's composition. I recommend exploring this aspect early on in your process, instead of slapping a background in at the end.



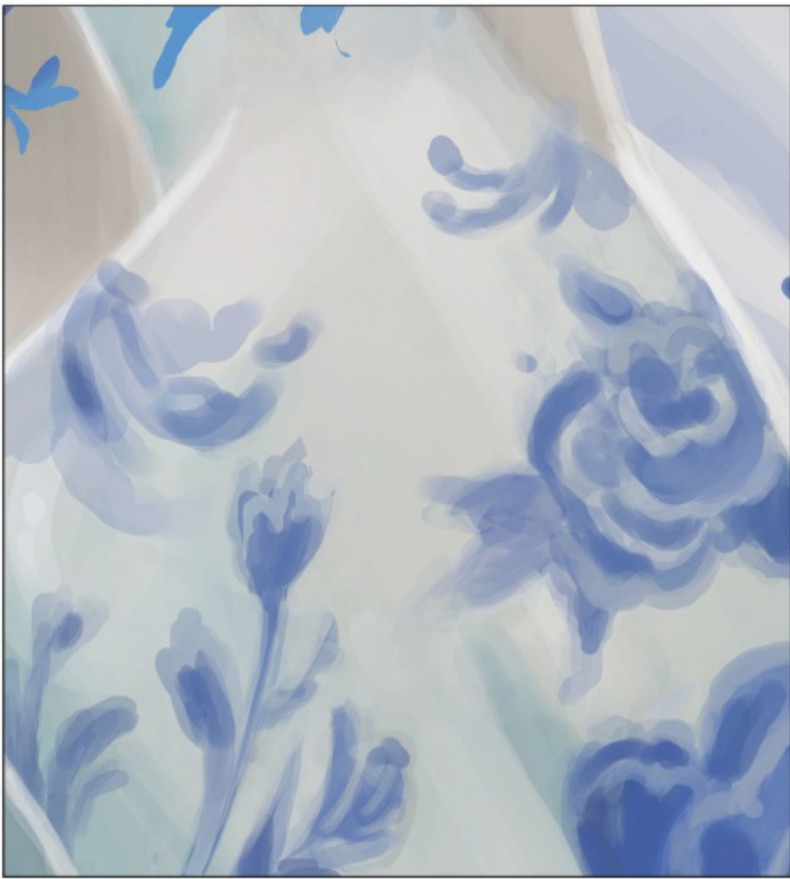
9 Check your accuracy regularly

Sometimes it's easy to forget to check where you are in your process, especially if you're having fun. When doing exploratory work, it's good to step back often. Check your values, your anatomy, where your composition is going and flip that canvas to highlight any errors – especially if you're portraying characters!



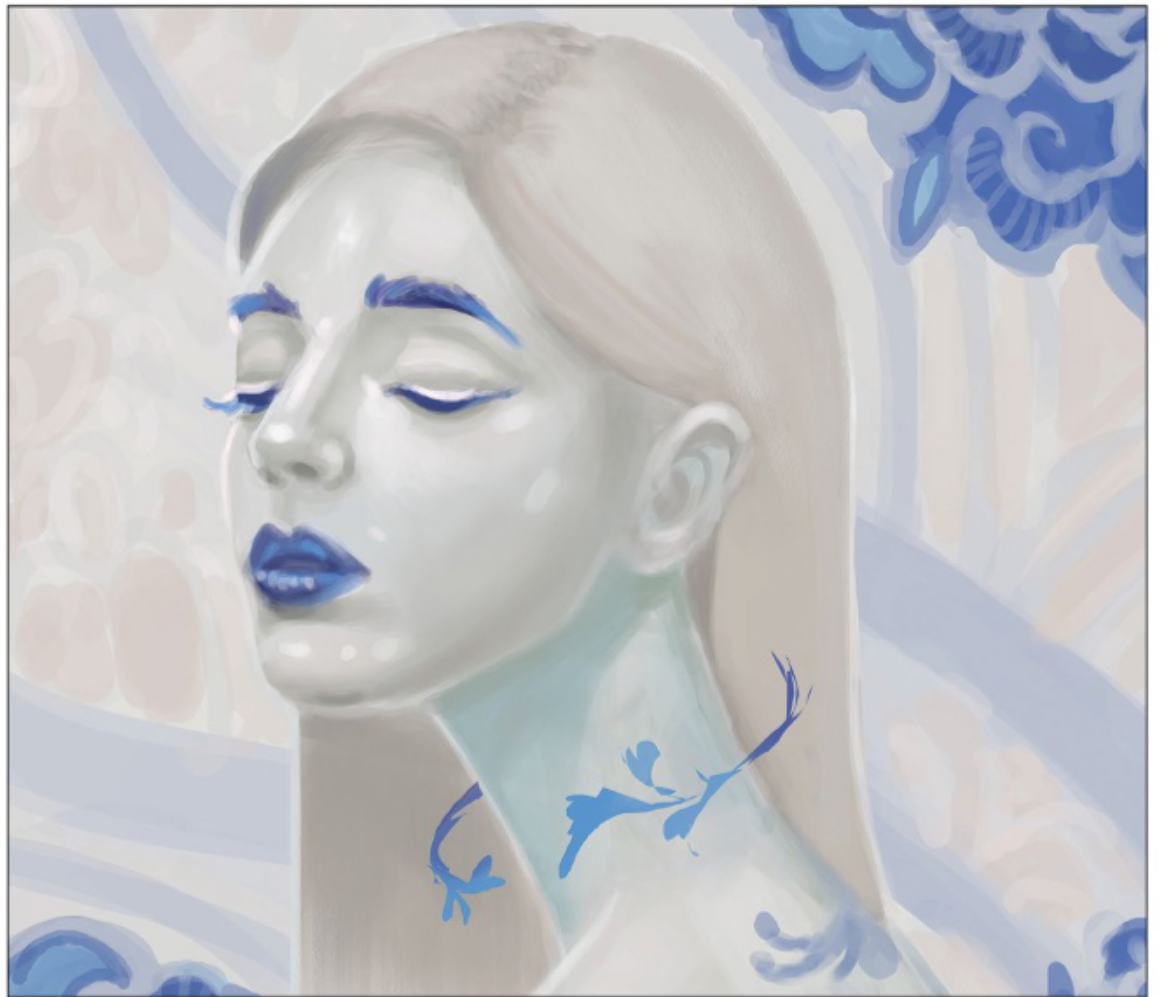
10 Don't commit too early

In keeping with the visual theme of Chinese porcelain vases, but also wanting to push the exploration, I think it would be visually interesting to have parts of the floral pattern still be wrapping around the figure as a metaphorical note. However, the more I step back from this, the more it doesn't work for me.



11 Consider consistency

The florals aren't working for me because they're clashing too much with the background, both in shape and size relation. I'm happy with how the background has turned out, so I want to design a pattern that fits with it more appropriately. My revised efforts are more successful: the pattern ends up feeling more like Japanese tattoos, which I'm very much inspired by.



12 Don't abandon ideas entirely

I still like the idea of floral patterns wrapping around the porcelain figure, and I want to add that extra element of fantasy. So I decide to keep the idea around the neck. The simplicity of it results in a more visceral image, rather than having the effect on show throughout the entire body.



13 Add final tweaks

Once I'm happy with the overall direction and ideas in the portrait, I start rendering out the face and body, and sharpen details such as the floral patterns. I keep in mind edge control as I do this – hardening and softening edges where appropriate to give the portrait an effective finish.



14 Make finishing adjustments

This is always the fun part; the final adjustments on a portrait is like putting frosting on a cake. This is where I balance colours and add extra flair. I also place a 50 per cent grey Overlay Noise layer to soften the digital look. I decide to change the makeup slightly for added colour vibrancy, and to celebrate bisexual colours. ●

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Get weekly news, reviews, tips & inspiration
Out every Tuesday



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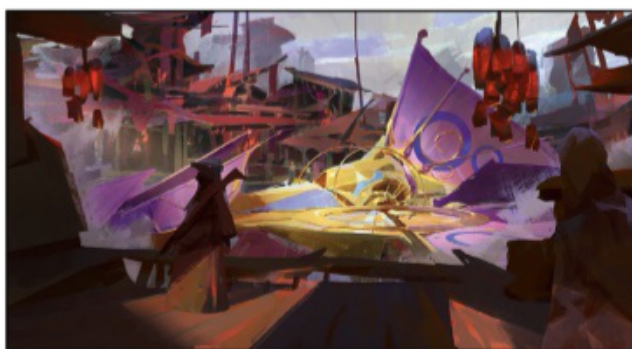
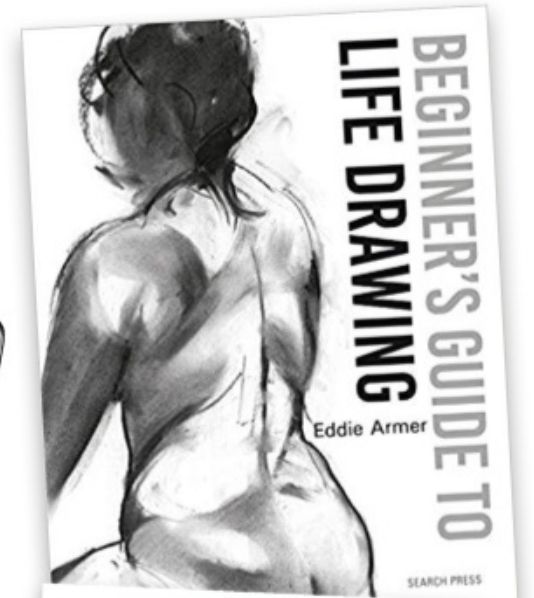


NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX Reviews



Artist's Choice Award
Art resources with a five-star rating receives the ImagineFX Artist's Choice award!

The latest art resources are put to the test by the ImagineFX team...



HARDWARE

92 Galaxy Note10+

There's much to like in Samsung's latest Note smartphone, which showcases Wacom tech and stellar specs.

TRAINING

95 Shape Design

Logan Preshaw gets under the skin of how art is made, as he explains how your choice of shapes affects the viewer.

BOOKS

96 Drawing the Curtain: Maurice Sendak's Designs for Opera and Ballet

An-depth look at illustrator Maurice Sendak's lesser-known oeuvre.



97 Beginner's Guide to Life Drawing

This bargain book is crammed with expert advice and beautifully illustrated examples.

97 Beginner's Guide to ZBrush

Become proficient in the 3D workhorse.

RATINGS EXPLAINED ★★★★★ Magnificent ★★★★★ Great ★★★★★ Good ★★★★★ Poor ★ Atrocious

Galaxy Note10+

PLUS POINT There's much to like in Samsung's latest Note, which showcases Wacom tech and stellar specs

Price From £999 (4G, 256GB) **Company** Samsung **Web** www.samsung.com

Samsung's Note line has been a favourite with creatives for years. And that trend looks set to continue with the new Note10+.

The device's 6.8-inch screen stretches the definition of 'pocket-sized'. But this statement needs qualifying. If you've seen an iPhone Xs Max with its 6.5-inch screen, then that's probably the upper limit of what you'd want to be carrying around with you. Samsung has managed to squeeze a bigger display into a similar-sized chassis – which is lighter than the Xs Max – by removing the phone's bezels. The result is an all-screen, notch-free experience.

Taking centre stage is that curved AMOLED panel. It's huge, punchy, vibrant and fills 91 per cent of the phone's fascia, framed by a tiny border and interrupted only by a small, punch-hole front camera. At the bottom is a USB-C port, speaker grille, the retractable, spring-loaded S Pen, and on the left are all the buttons.

The Galaxy Note 10+' design isn't just the pinnacle of Samsung's smartphone legacy; it's the best we've seen to date, with the polished aluminium frame melding beautifully into the Gorilla Glass curved back and front. The Note 10+ is protected with IP68 water and dust resistance, and thanks to the pre-fitted screen protector you'll have

“The Galaxy Note 10+' design isn't just the pinnacle of Samsung's smartphone legacy; it's the best we've seen to date”



Take wide-angle landscape photos or zoom in for the perfect portrait shot with the Note10+'s rear camera.

something safeguarding that beautiful screen right out of the box.

LIGHT AND SHADE

The device features a Dynamic AMOLED panel with a 19:9 aspect ratio and QHD+ resolution (1,440x3,040). The panel has HDR10+ support, which ensures it gets both very bright and very dark. Blacks showcased by the Note 10+ look deep and rich, making it perfect for watching content in low light with its 2,000,000:1 contrast ratio, and thanks to its high brightness levels (up to 1,200 nits), it's easy to see what's going on outdoors when using it. Viewing angles are also stellar, and while it hasn't got the highest refresh-



The Note10+'s huge 6.8-inch screen is only broken up by the front-facing 10MP selfie camera.

rate around, it's still a class-leading canvas for your creativity in terms of size and colour reproduction.

The Note 10+ features a Wacom digitiser under the display that, when coupled with the phone's S Pen, supports 4,096 levels of pressure sensitivity. This is combined with deep software integration with the phone itself. Pull out the S Pen and a menu cascades up with shortcuts to S Pen functions such as creating a new note, writing on a screenshot, translating on-screen text and more.

You can supplement this menu with shortcuts to other S Pen apps, which can be downloaded through the Google Play Store. The Notes app is handy, and thanks to excellent optical

The S Pen doubles as a remote control, enabling you to manipulate the device with just a wave of your hand.





The smartphone's back panel shimmers in a different hue, depending on how it captures the light.



There's little danger of losing the S Pen – it tucks away into the bottom of the smartphone when not in use.



The Note10+ is just 7.9mm thick, and weighs a shade under 200g.

character recognition, the phone can index notes based on your handwriting, making them searchable.

Yet what really sets the S Pen apart is how good it is for artists. Its precision wipes the floor with that of its main competitor (the Huawei Mate 20 X and its M Pen), latency is low, and you can work on much larger files than ever before without slowdown. We exported a multi-layered PSD file that was around 12.8MP and 90MB, working on it with virtually no lag over four hours. If you're happy with SketchBook for starting off projects and Samsung Notes for casual doodles, the Note 10+ is like having a pin-sharp Wacom Cintiq in your pocket. As with the Note 9, you can tilt

the S Pen for intuitive shading, provided you're working within an app that supports the feature.

CAPTURING IMAGES THAT POP

The Note 10-series carries forward the 12MP dual-aperture main camera introduced on the Galaxy S9, and combines it with a 2x zoom 12MP camera and an 0.5x zoom, ultrawide 16MP camera. The time of flight (ToF) camera helps with depth sensing to create better effects when blurring out the background of portraits, and Live Focus photos and videos. Results across lighting conditions are very good, with detail consistently high and images looking poppy and saturated out of the camera. There are plenty of

shooting modes, including Pro mode, so you can take control of your shooting experience, and the phone shoots RAW photos, too.

While low-light photography isn't quite as well handled as on the Huawei P30 Pro or Pixel 3, the Note 10+ still manages to deliver an excellent, multi-purpose imaging experience across lighting conditions. It also shoots brilliant videos at up to 4K resolution, 60fps, as well as up to 960fps slow motion at Full HD resolution.

FUTURE-PROOF

A considerable amount of power and storage sit inside the Note 10+'s frame, making it about as future-proofed as you can get. Specs include an Exynos 9825 CPU combined with 12GB RAM and 256GB storage, which can be boosted up to 1TB thanks to microSD card expansion. If you opt for the 5G version, you can pick it up with 512GB storage, though the maxed-out model will set you back £1,199. The phone's 4300mAh battery gets it through a full day, and with its supplied charger the Note 10+ powers up from zero to 100 per cent in just over an hour.

If you're a creative who likes to draw on the go, the Note-series is the only real choice when it comes to phones with excellent pen-input out of the box. Compared to the standard Note 10, the Note 10+ is significantly bigger, has a sharper screen, better battery life, more optional storage and RAM, as well as a ToF depth camera.

Yet the main selling point of Samsung's smartphone is the larger screen to draw on and its extra resolution. There's no getting around the fact the Note 10+ is costly, but artists with deep pockets will discover that this is a brilliant piece of kit.

DETAILS

Features

- 6.5-inch AMOLED panel
- 1,440x3,040 resolution
- 19.9 aspect ratio
- 2,000,000:1 contrast ratio
- S Pen supports 4,096 levels of pressure sensitivity
- 12MP-16MP rear camera
- Up to 512GB storage
- 162.3x77.2x7.9mm
- 196g

Rating



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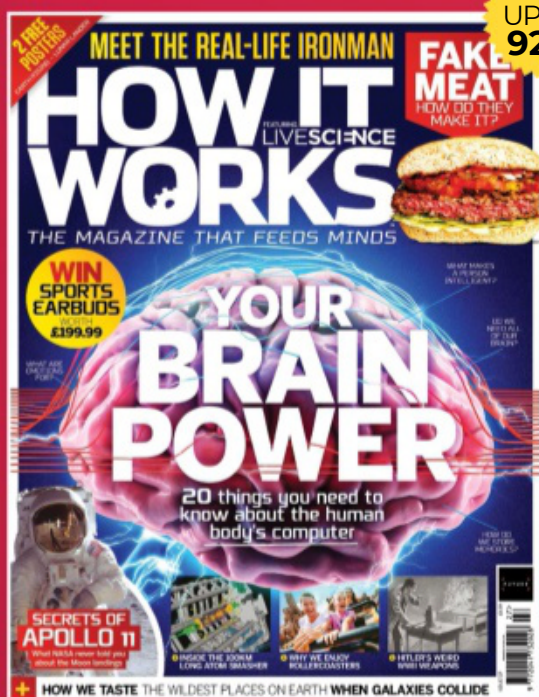
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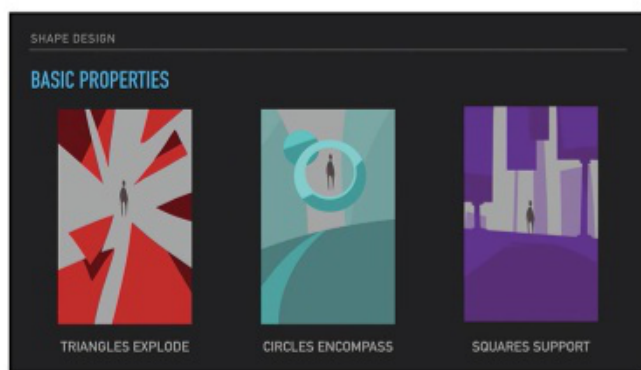
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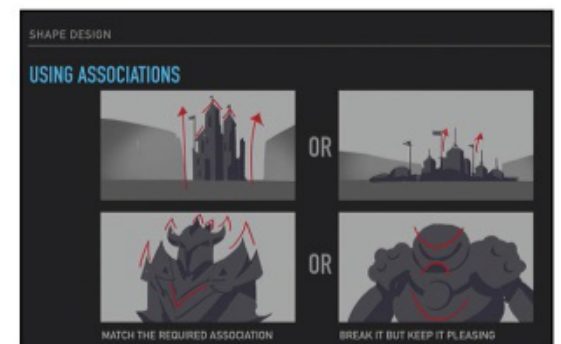
Logan Preshaw narrates over a nicely made series of slides to explain all the key points you need to understand why visual shapes matter.

Logan's video – part-theory, part-practical – offers a useful overview to the ideas behind using different shapes in your art.



Logan ties up the principles and practice of shape design in an analysis video that shows how he applied each idea.

Using different shapes as the foundation for your designs creates a range of responses from the viewer.



A time-lapse video chapter sees Logan apply the principles he's outlined in a concept art piece.

Shape Design

GET INTO SHAPE Logan Preshaw gets under the skin of how art is made as he explains how your choice of shapes affects the viewer

Publisher Foundation Art Group **Price** \$10 **Format** Download **Web** www.foundationartgroup.com

Concept artist Logan Preshaw's video addresses a key art topic: the shapes we choose to draw, and the effect they have on the viewer. Exploring the ideas can transform your art and how you approach it: when you take control of shape, you become a designer, arranging the elements within your frame to fulfil your vision. As Logan puts it: "The ultimate goals in an artwork are to direct the viewer to see what we want them to see, and to have them feel what we want them to feel."

In a 40-minute talk, he starts from first principles, explaining how basic shapes like circles, squares and triangles each generate a different association within us. This means how you design a building, for example, can affect how the viewer responds to it, perhaps feeling comforted versus scared. You can go further by

composing shapes with colour, light and shadow within your composition to change the feel of your image.

The way Logan takes you through this is clear and concise, if a little wearing to actually listen to because of the constant sibilance effect on the audio. He follows his detailing of the theory by showing the ideas in practice, creating a concept art piece where the shapes tell a story in themselves. A brief analysis video breaks down how he's applied the principles, again in a very clear way.

This video is the latest in a regular series by the Foundation Art Group, which offers regular art tutorials to buy and download, or via a Patreon subscription via the reduced price of \$5 per video. It's a great little refresher for experienced artists, and could be revelatory for beginners wanting to understand better how artists create great pieces.

DETAILS

Topics covered

- Basic shapes
- Viewer associations
- Creating a shape language
- Building focus through shape
- Practical application

Length
77 minutes

Rating



ARTIST PROFILE

LOGAN PRESHAW

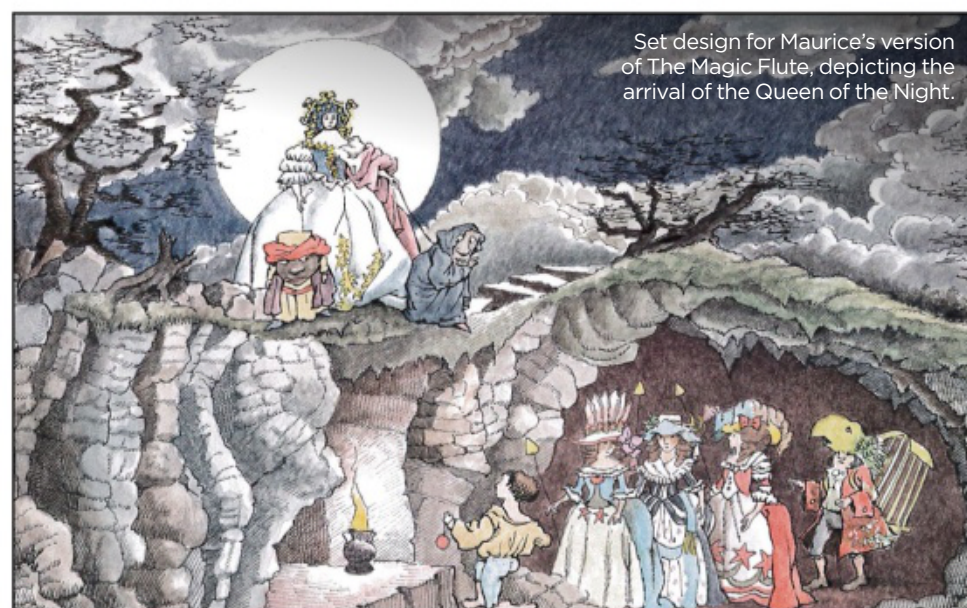
Logan is a concept artist working in film, games and location-based design and illustration. His clients include Weta Workshop, DreamWorks, Cartoon Network, Disney and Nickelodeon. Projects include creating artwork for the Quiet Robot board game Salvos and the tabletop RPG Fraggled Empire, as well as working on backgrounds and design for the comedy Pacific Heat. He's also released a digital art book on his own Junkernauts project.



www.artstation.com/logibear



Maurice Sendak created this study to visualise the stage for the opera production of *Where the Wild Things Are*.



Set design for Maurice's version of *The Magic Flute*, depicting the arrival of the Queen of the Night.

Drawing the Curtain: Maurice Sendak's Designs for Opera and Ballet

FRUSTRATINGLY WILD This in-depth look at illustrator Maurice Sendak's lesser-known oeuvre will conjure both awe and annoyance

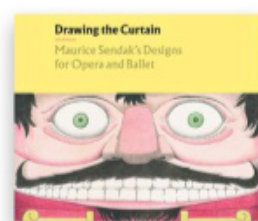
Author Rachel Federman **Publisher** Prestel Publishing **Price** £30 **Web** <https://prestelpublishing.randomhouse.de> **Available** Now

Best known as a children's author and illustrator, Maurice Sendak also designed a number of opera and ballet productions. And it's this lesser-known period of his career that this book explores.

Overflowing with essays discussing the importance of music and movement to Maurice, coupled with over 150 drawings from New York's Morgan Library and Museum's collection, *Drawing the Curtain* presents every developmental stage of five productions: *Where the Wild Things Are*, *The Magic Flute*, *The Cunning Little Vixen*, *The Love for Three Oranges* and *The Nutcracker*.

The cover, an infectious, grinning self-portrait of the artist, sets a light-hearted, fun tone. The book's contents follow suit, with Maurice's distinctive style splashed over every page in the form of sketches, watercolours, dioramas and photography.

This book is a real joy to pore over. Highlights include a cross-section drawing of one of the Wild Things'



Drawing the Curtain
Maurice Sendak's Designs
for Opera and Ballet

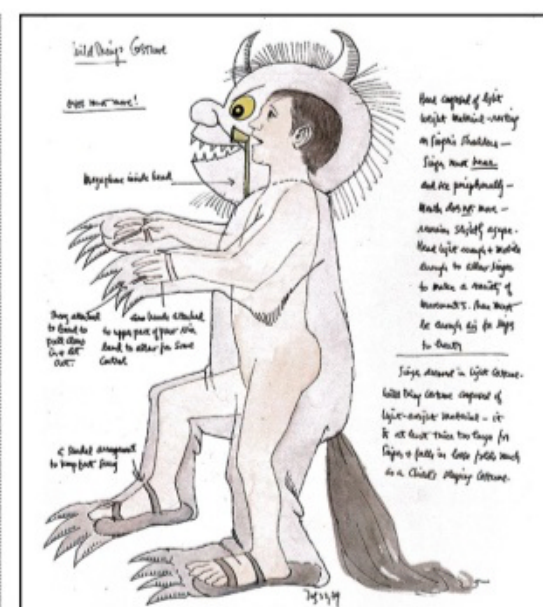
costumes, showing a small boy inside with his little hands and feet strapped into the design. And the watercolour and pencil design for the Temple of the Sun backdrop is not only an illustrative masterpiece, but also a magnificent insight into Maurice's historical influences and inspirations.

But the biggest delight has to be the artist's early sketches, which are accompanied by his annotations and

“The cover, an infectious, grinning self-portrait of the artist, sets a fun tone”

often document the most rudimentary design details. It's just a shame that Maurice's flamboyant handwriting is tricky to read – translations in the captions would have been welcome.

The seemingly random formatting of the book's content also lets it down slightly. While some pages have multiple images crammed in, printed too small to be able to fully appreciate



A costume design for a Wild Thing, complete with annotated notes from Maurice.

them, elsewhere you'll find completely blank pages. It's also disappointing that there are a number of images printed close to or across the spine.

The essays explore Maurice's motivations and inspirations in some depth. This perhaps explains why the presentation of his imagery has had to be compromised on occasion.

While far from perfect, the quality and volume of content here makes this hardback good value for money. The many explorations of Maurice's design process will reveal a new – if slightly frustrating – perspective on this renowned artist's second career.

RATING ★★★★★☆



Beginner's Guide to Life Drawing

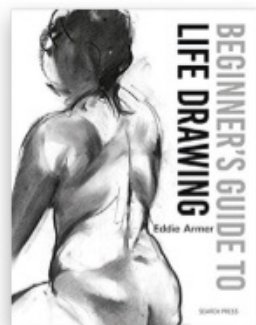


BODY CONFIDENT Crammed with expert advice and beautifully illustrated examples, this life-drawing guide will be the best £10 you've ever spent

Author Eddie Armer **Publisher** Search Press **Price** £10 **Web** www.searchpress.com **Available** Now

Eddie Armer's guide to life drawing is the best lesson you'll get, short of being in a studio with the man himself. The almost 100-page softcover starts with a short but sweet history of life drawing, before quickly moving on to helpful analysis and illustrated examples of the suitable drawing materials.

What follows is a series of exercises covering everything from line, tone

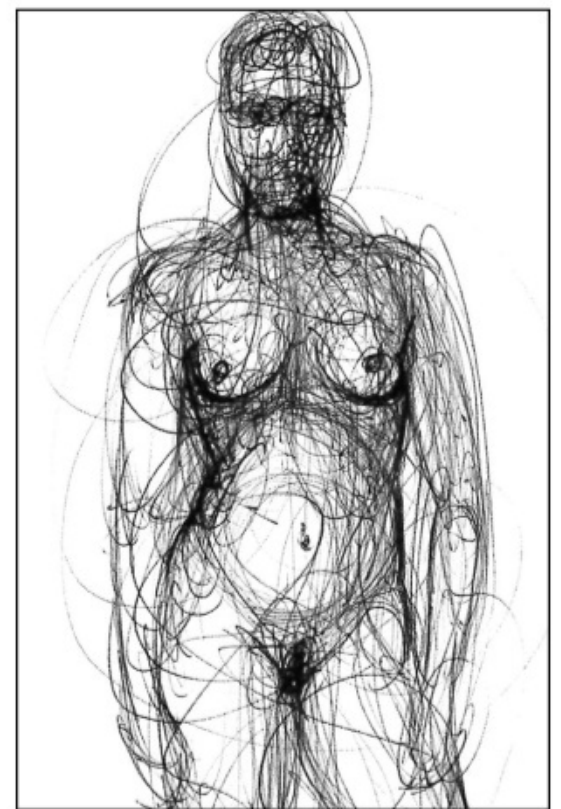


On drawing faces, Eddie Armer urges artists not to draw what they think they're seeing, but the reality.

and shade right through to positioning and drawing hands, feet and faces. Eddie breaks down each of his lessons into easy-to-follow steps, all accompanied by precise illustrations, leaving no room for confusion. Exercises are individual, which means that you don't need to complete one before moving on to the next and can dip in and out as you please (we highly recommend the scribble exercise on page 54 as a particularly fun way to get started).

When you consider the amount of expertise and level of teaching contained within this book, it's hard to believe it costs less than £10. Offering excellent value for money, this is the ultimate beginner's guide to drawing the human body.

RATING ★★★★★



Speed is the key to a successful scribble drawing. As Eddie says, "Do not ponder over details."

Beginner's Guide to ZBrush

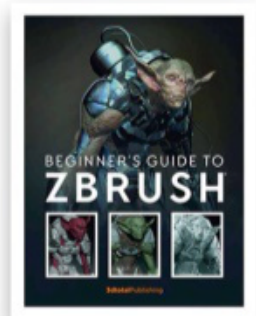
INSUFFICIENT INFORMATION All the guidance you need to get started with and become a pro in ZBrush – providing you can find it, that is...

Editor Marisa Lewis **Publisher** 3dtotal Publishing **Price** £30 **Web** www.shop.3dtotal.com **Available** Now

ZBrush is a powerful 3D tool, but newcomers can struggle while trying to master its complexities.

This is an issue this 270-page textbook-style guide aims to tackle.

And it's successful for the most part, offering detailed exercises and breakdowns to help readers learn everything from the basics through to advanced sculpting techniques. The copy is accessible there are multiple



Concept artist Ruben Alba demonstrates how to depict a range of surfaces and textures in his lengthy project.

images and downloadable resources to help readers get to grips with fundamental ZBrush techniques.

The book falls short as a resource, however, with its content listing. While it's divided into chronological sections, the table of contents lists simply the name of each chapter. The Introduction to the ZBrush Interface chapter, for example, is 59 pages long and includes everything from base mesh generation to navigating around your model. But the only way to find these individual features is to sift through the entire section, which is both time-consuming and frustrating.

There's no denying the quality of content here, but if you're planning on purchasing, you might want to invest in some Post-it Notes at the same time.

RATING ★★★☆☆



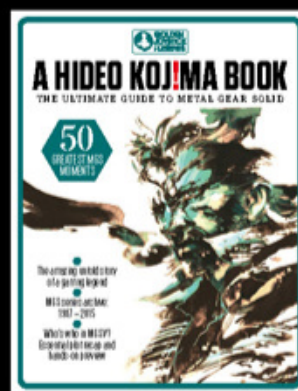
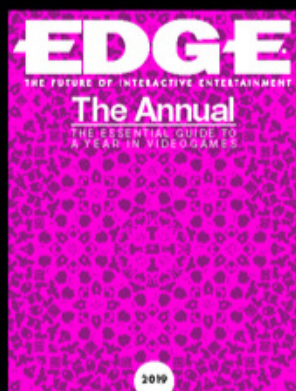
Across 54 pages freelance character artist Raul Tavares shows how he sculpts a fantasy figure.

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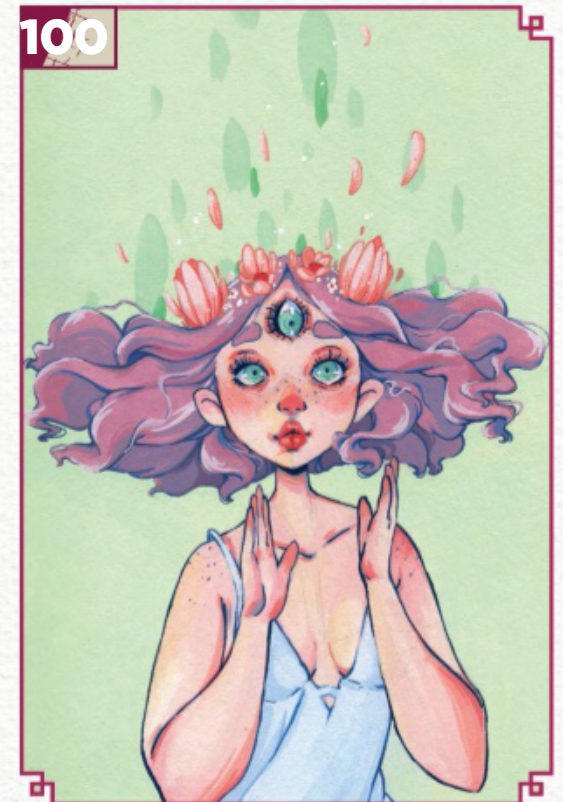
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This issue:

100 Traditional art FXPosé

Explore this month's selection of the finest traditional art, which has been sent in by you!

104 Embrace the chaos of watercolours

Emily Hare paints a snuggle of dozing dragons using watercolour, a medium that results in no two paintings looking the same.

110 Core Skills: Drawing techniques

Timothy Von Rueden shows the importance and practice of creating contrast in your artwork.

114 First Impressions: Marc Scheff

Game of Thrones drew a blank with this artist and educator...



FXPosé

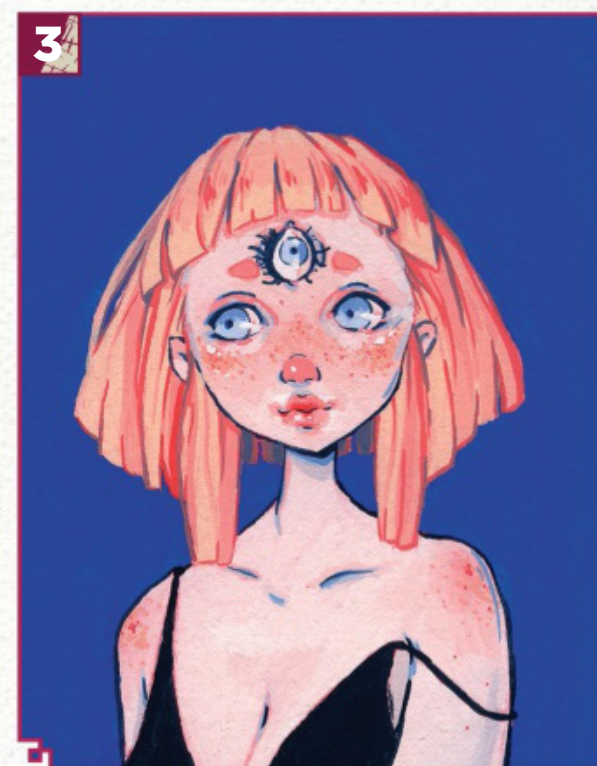
SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS



Chelsea Gracei

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Gouache, watercolour, Copic markers, Procreate **WEB:** www.gracei.bigcartel.com

Chelsea is a multimedia illustrator. Inspired by nature and magic, she loves using bold colours and flowing shapes to create unique characters.



1 DROWNED

"Dragged down to the deep waters by her own demons, she resigns herself to never see the light sparkle across the shallows again."



2 AUTUMN BREEZE

"The first crisp breeze of autumn creeps into the late summer air, promising crispy leaves, glowing pumpkins and Samhain magic."



3 DIVINATIONS

"A gouache study in orange and blue, this piece is inspired by the swirling visions that occur behind an open third eye."

4 MIDSUMMER

"Inspired by the midsummer traditions and the magic that lingers in the long days and midnight sun, this piece is an ode to the season and all its bounty."





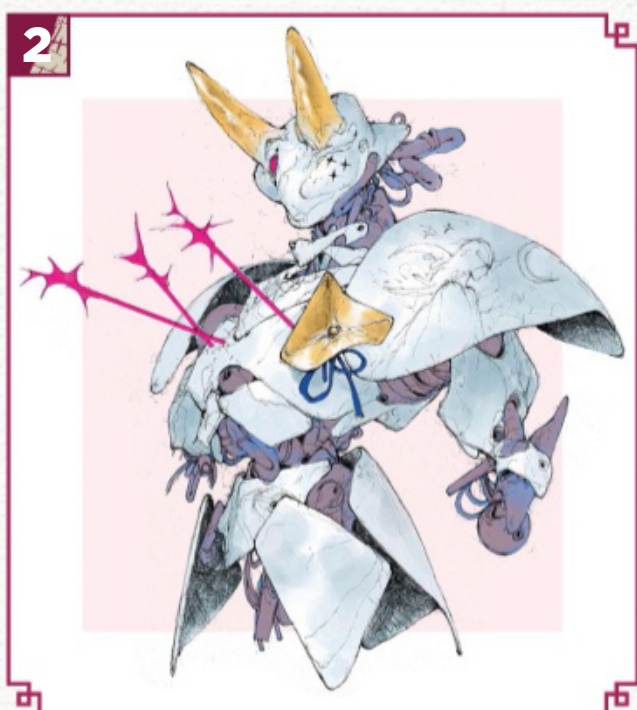
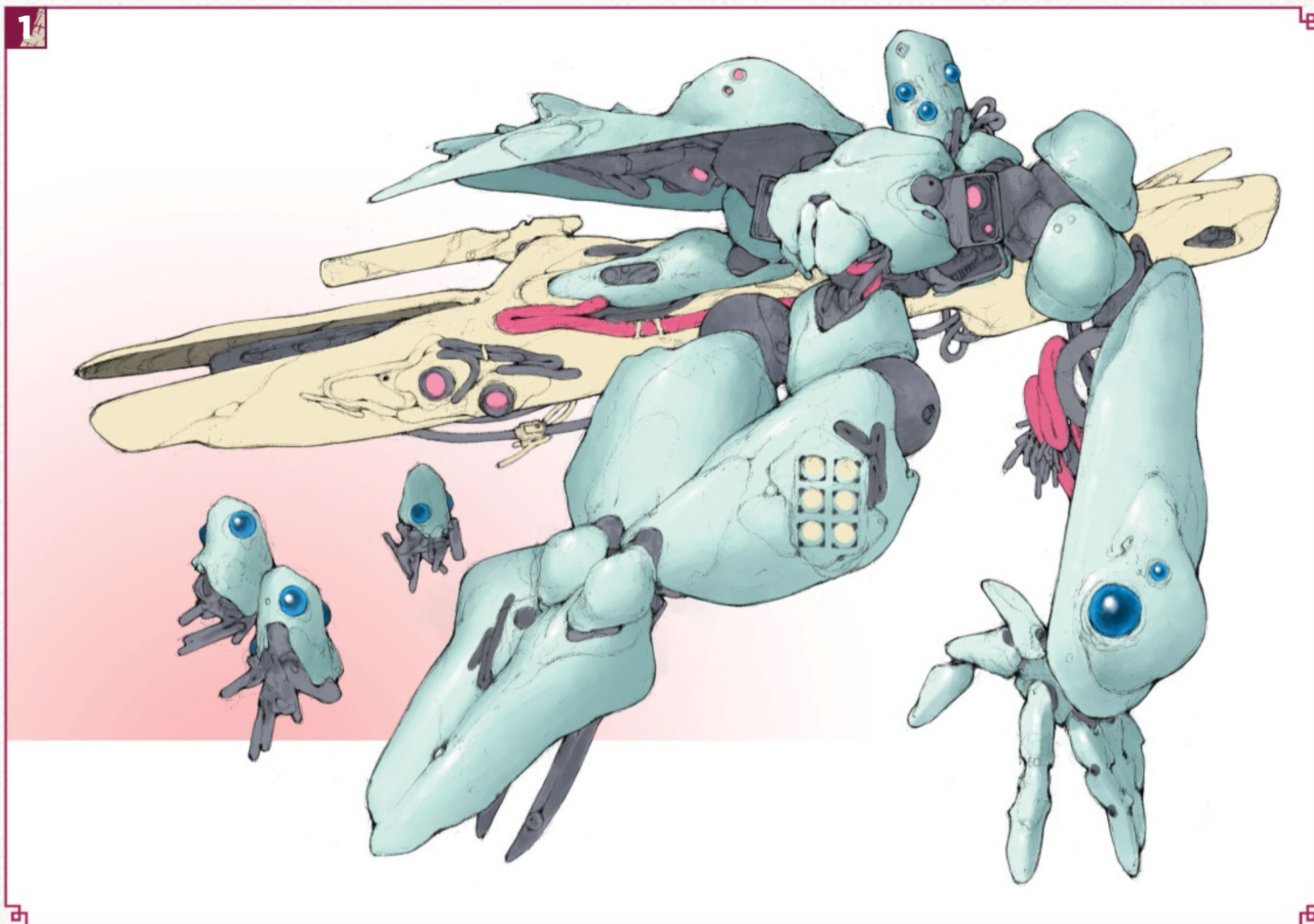
Mony Pich

LOCATION: Canada **MEDIA:** Pencils, Inks, digital **WEB:** www.instagram.com/momopich

Mony places a big focus on drawing and simple colours, and enjoys creating characters using elements of both fantasy and machine. His work is that of distant futures.

1 **DISTANT LIGHTNING**

"Taking inspiration from old age anime, I started creating a series of machine gods that roam the cosmos. My hope was to create organic-looking machines."



2 **NULLIFY**

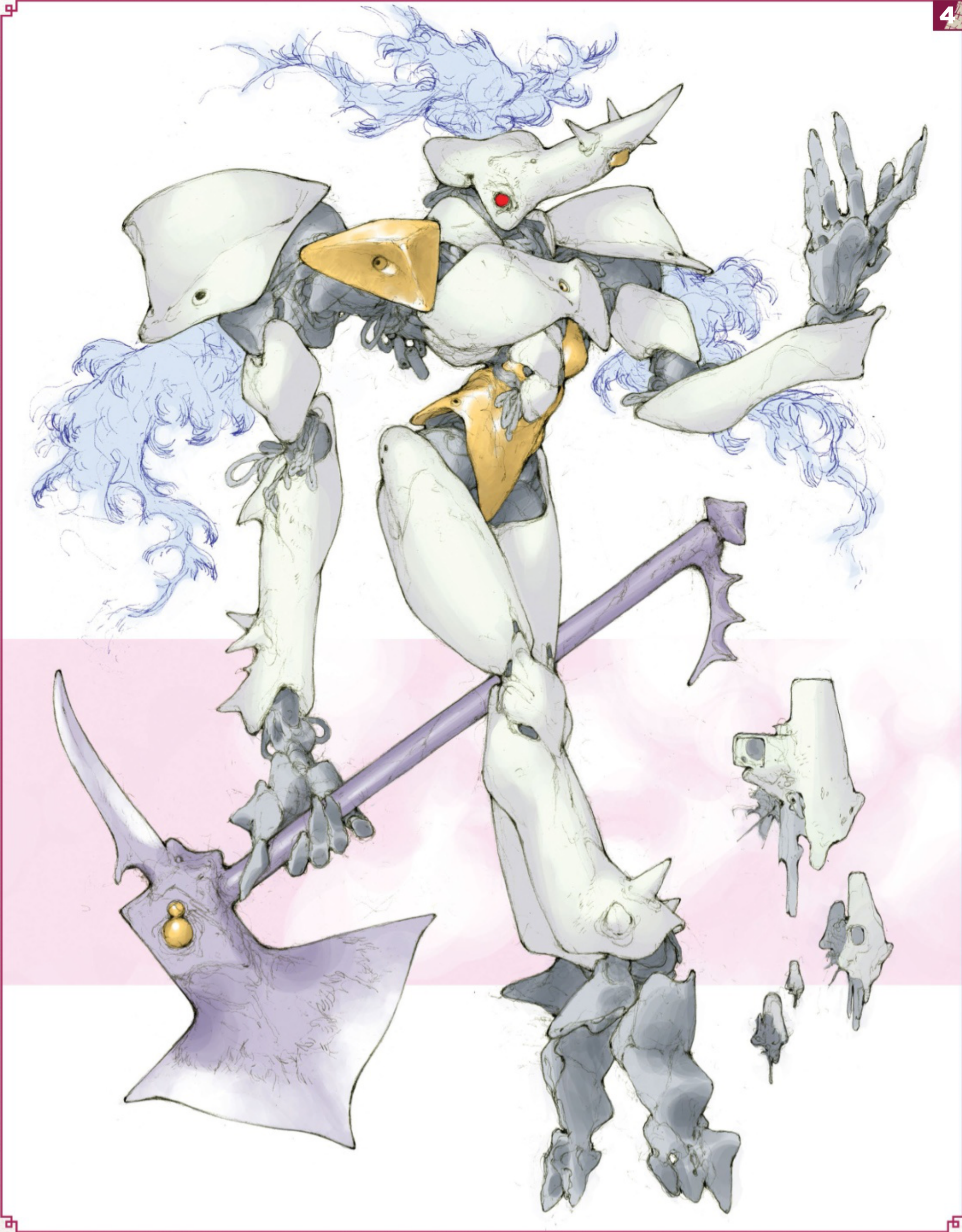
"I used to draw knights and that knowledge of armour translates into unique mechanical designs."

3 **BREATHE SOFTLY**

"This was a reminder to myself that it's fine to rest when needed. I draw very lightly and build the drawing up as I go, which allows for interesting line weight."

4 **WARRIOR'S SPIRIT**

"One style of machines I create is one that's more elegant. Elongated limbs and more natural posing helps in creating more dream-like beings."







Watercolour

EMBRACE THE CHAOS OF WATERCOLOURS

EMILY HARE shows you how she paints a snuggle of dozing dragons using watercolour, a medium that results in no two paintings looking the same

Over the past three years I've returned to using traditional media, having spent over a decade painting digitally. I hadn't used watercolours since college and I have completely fallen in love with them

One of the things I like about watercolour is that it's impossible to recreate the same effect. If I were to attempt to paint these dragons again from start to finish, they wouldn't look the same. This uniqueness is very appealing to me. Chaos rules on the paper, and the water and pigment teach you to let go and not be too precious about the outcome. Happy accidents are frequent and sometimes will add beautiful shapes and textures to a painting that you hadn't necessarily planned.

However, in the same moment you could end up with a ruined painting,

ARTIST INSIGHT

SLOWLY BUILD UP YOUR WASHES

I'll spend many hours building up my watercolour washes until they're as saturated as I want them. You won't be able to lift some pigments after putting them on to the paper.

but you just take a deep breath and start again from scratch. Sometimes it doesn't go as you planned, but that doesn't matter – you'll learn something for the next painting!

FULLY FORMED DRAGONS

My sleeping dragons painting has been created for the cover of my 2020 calendar, which is launching on Kickstarter this month. I love the idea of a big snuggly pile of dragons and it beamed into my brain almost completely fully formed. The sketch part was fairly easy, although did take quite a while to get all the dragons balanced and make sure the composition kept the eye moving around the page.

One thing that I changed, which helped this enormously, was the tail. The pointy end of the tail was at one time sweeping away from the group of dragons towards the lower left part

of the page. As soon as I changed this so that it pointed towards the central dragon head, it altered the feel of the composition completely.

I had a big challenge with painting this and had to change my method slightly because of the red pigment. Usually, when I paint with watercolours I can paint in thin washes without the lower dried layer moving or lifting. With red pigment, even with the 'permanent' ones, it seems they were determined to lift! So I had to approach each dragon individually compared to my usual technique, which is to work on many areas of the painting as I go along. It has been a brilliant experience!



Emily is inspired by fantasy, folklore and fairytales. Working mainly in watercolour, she's published three books and you can see more of her art at www.emilyhare.co.uk ➡

Traditional Artist Workshop

MATERIALS

PAPER

■ Langton Prestige 100 per cent Cotton board by Daler Rowney

TOOLS

■ Size 6 Rosemary & Co Series 22 Sable brush
■ Size 3 Rosemary & Co Series 33 Sable brush
■ Size 4/0 cheap acrylic brush
■ Photoshop
■ Misting bottle
■ Graphite powder
■ Kitchen towel

PAINT

■ Daniel Smith Watercolour Paints: Aussie Red gold, Bronzite genuine, Vandyke brown, Lamp black, Permanent red, Perinone orange, Rose of ultramarine, Deep scarlet, Pyrrol scarlet, Perylene violet, Paynes grey, Transparent brown oxide, Neutral tint, Yellow ochre, Moonglow.
■ Golden Fluid White acrylic paint



1 Sketching in Photoshop

I have a very definite idea of a lovely bundle of dragons snuggling in together on a big pile of gold and make the initial sketch in Photoshop so that I can tweak and play with the composition until I'm happy with it. I treat Photoshop as I would sketching in pencil – it saves me paper and lots of erasing!



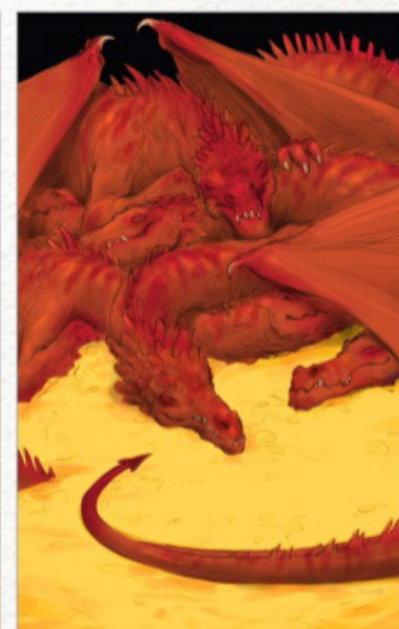
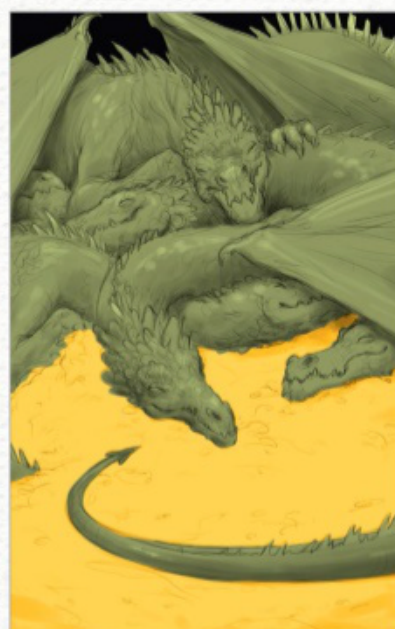
2 Throwing down some values

I work in black and white at this next stage and very loosely decide on the kind of values I'm looking for with these dragons. I want there to be a good distinction between them and the gold.

TOOL TIP

CLEAN SPILLS QUICKLY

Have a piece of kitchen towel to hand in case stray blobs of paint find their way on to parts of your painting.



3 Deciding on the colour palette

Initially, I wanted the dragons to be different colours, but after testing I noticed it spoilt the notion that you could not tell where one dragon ends and another begins. I finally decide on red dragons: they look fantastic against the gold.



4 Prepare to transfer the sketch using graphite

I print out the lines of this image to A4 paper and then, using graphite powder (dabbed on some kitchen towel), I rub this all over the back of the print. I make sure to remove any excess graphite powder thoroughly before the next stage.



5 *Transfer the dragons to illustration board*

Using a red Col-Erase pencil (so I can see where I've drawn), I tape the print on to the board and draw over the sketch. This transfers the graphite to the board. I remove any excess powder with an eraser.



6 *Mix your paints and start initial wash*

Because the yellow won't interact in a negative way with my dragons I start with this colour first. I wet the board and then start to roughly dab down the gold. There's no need to be too careful at this point; however, I did still avoid painting over the dragons.

ARTIST INSIGHT

USE REFERENCE!

Dragons may be imaginary creatures, but to make them feel more believable, do lots of research into bat wings, lizards, birds... anything that might help make your dragon feel like it could be a living creature.

PAPER TIP

COLD OR HOT PRESS PAPER?

For any image which will have a lot of detail, choose hot press (smooth) surfaces to paint on.



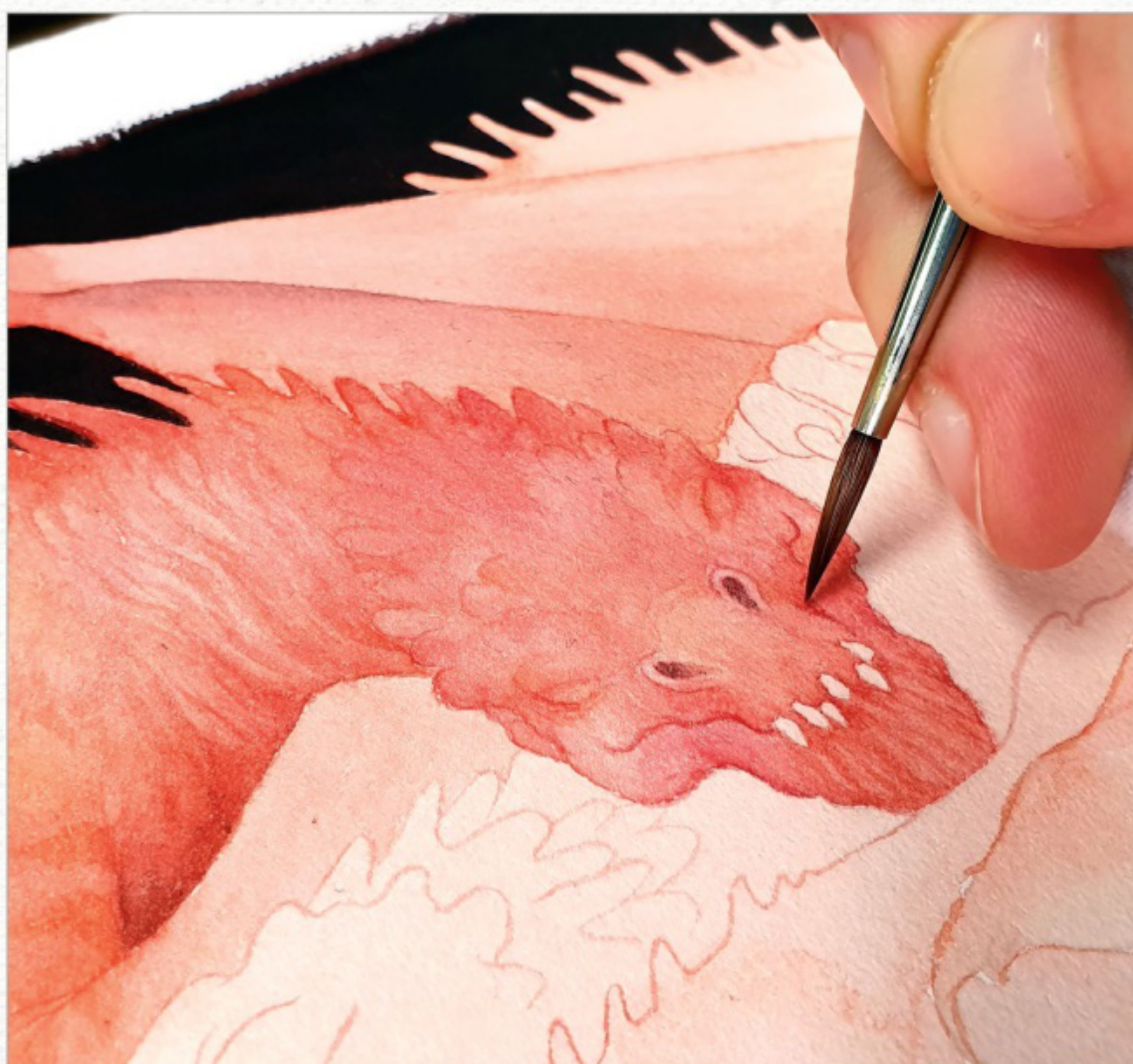
7 *Blocking out each area individually*

Because red watercolour pigment is so fickle (the kind that I use tends not to stay fixed to the board and will re-wet easily), I carefully block in a watered-down red, starting from the top dragon and working down.



8 *Paint in over the pencil lines*

At this point I don't want to lose the lines from the transferred drawing. So using a fine brush (size 3) I go over the whole painting with a dark red. I will paint over this later on in the process. ➡➡



9 Starting with the top dragon, render the form

My light source is from above so I keep this in mind constantly. I build up gradually with dozens of thin layers of pigment until I reach the saturation that I'm looking for (I keep the reference of my colour test in front of me at all times).



10 Differentiating each dragon

It might be hard to make out, but I've given each dragon a slightly different red. Some are slightly more pink, some more orange and some a little more purple. It keeps them individual while also being very similar!

PAINT TIP

ADD EXTRA SHINE

My favourite paints are made by Daniel Smith. Some of their pigments use real gemstone that add a unique quality to the artwork.



ARTIST INSIGHT

TO WORK WET IN WET OR WET ON DRY?

If you want soft, blurred edges, paint on to wet paper/board. It's also a great way to build up interesting textures in a loose manner. For crisp hard edges you must make sure that the paper is completely dry. Always have clean water at hand.

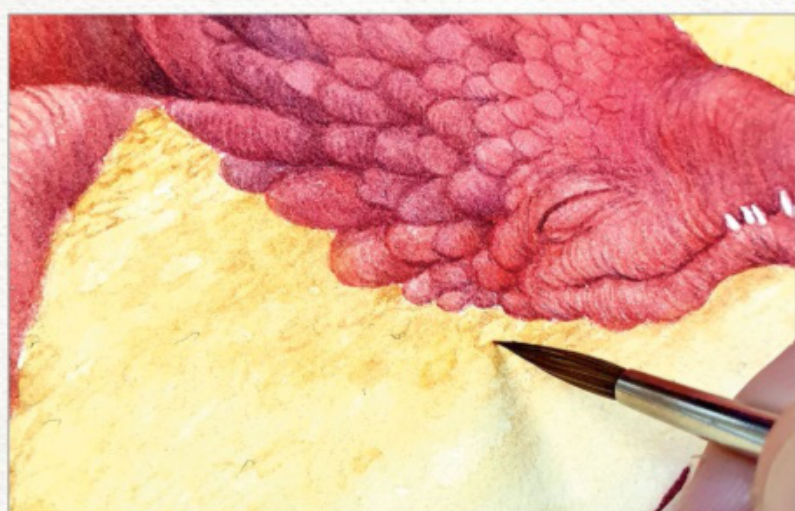
11 Take your time!

It's tempting to rush toward the finishing of a painting, particularly those final touches. Instead, I sleep on it and return to the painting the next day. I can then see it with fresh eyes and make any necessary changes.



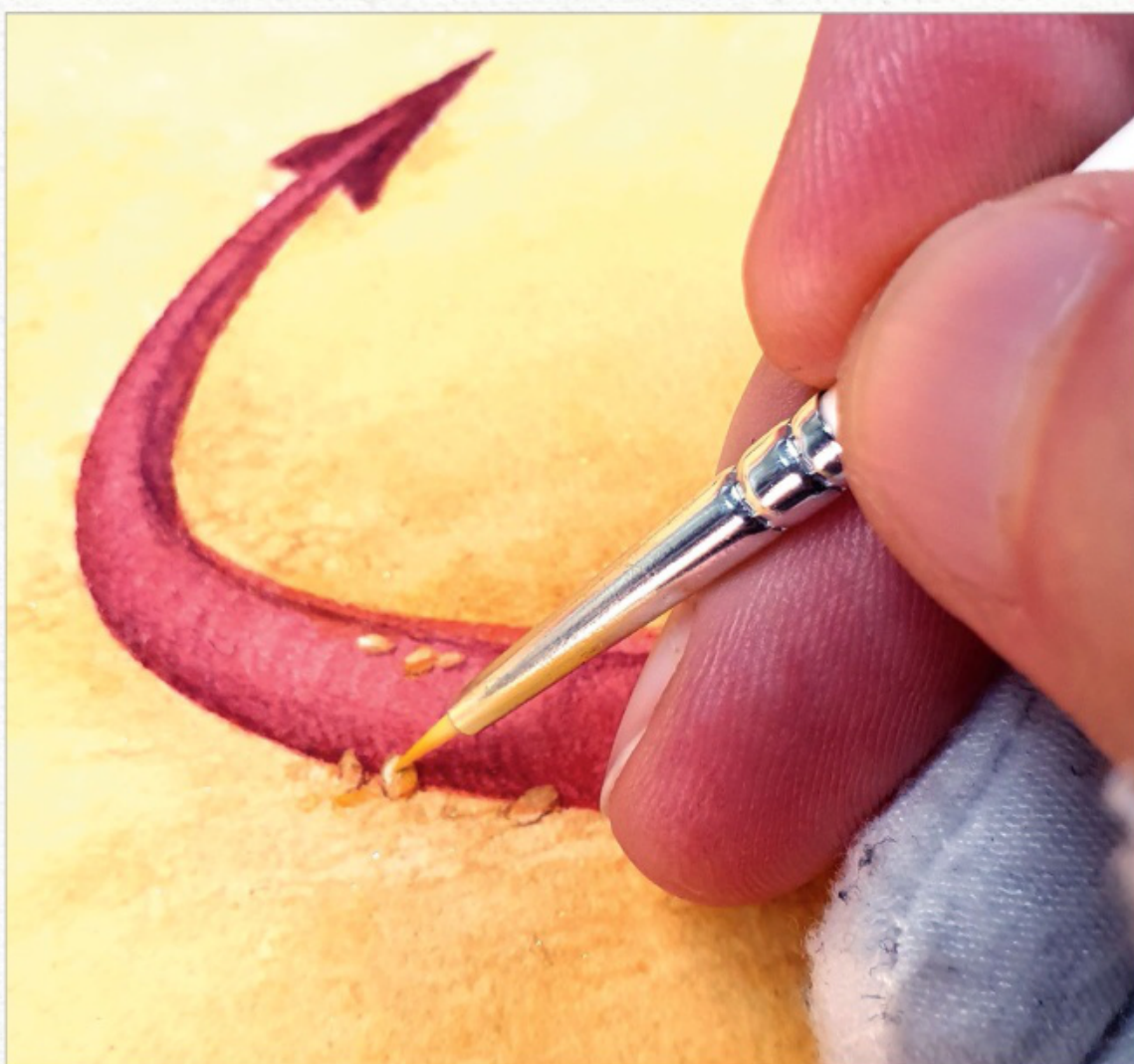
12 Building up the gold

I don't want to (nor do I need to) paint each gold coin. I just want to trick the eyes to what they're seeing. I concentrate on the areas near the dragons and add more saturation and little details to indicate coins.



13 Refining your details

At this point I'm looking at the painting as a whole and upping the shadow darkness and any other areas that I want to really pop, particularly under the wings and around the faces of the dragons.



14 Finishing touches

I add some gold coins to the dragons' faces and over the tail using a mix of white acrylic and Daniel Smith's Aussie red gold. Some shadows behind these make them pop. The coins help to integrate the dragons into their golden boudoir.



15 The finished article

Once I finish a painting I'll usually leave it for a day or two before I officially call it 'finished'. That way I'm able to see it better because when you've been spending hours staring at something it's hard to see the areas where it can be improved.



16 Digital colour correction

Red and gold is very tricky when scanning and printing so I spent a little time using Photoshop's Color Balance adjustment tools to tone down the over-saturation of the red from the initial scan. ●



Core skills: Part 3

DRAW ON THE POWER OF CONTRAST

Continuing his drawing techniques series, **TIMOTHY VON RUEDEN** shows the fundamental importance and practice of creating contrast in your artwork

My favourite aspect to work with in art is contrast. This usually occurs when working with colour through hue, saturation, and value. Since we're working with pencils, we can't harness contrast with hue and saturation. Instead we're forced to work with value contrast and it's key to creating a drawing and illustration that's easy for the viewer to navigate.

We can work within the value limits by concentrating on the level of

contrast in the drawing's detail, focus and edge control. This can be implemented through something as simple as a dark to light gradation. The human eye tends to be attracted to high levels of contrast: bear this in mind when you add your light and dark values.

I try to create a focal point in most of my work, which relies heavily on high contrast and then the rest of the drawing will be more subtle and have fewer value shifts. This will create a place of interest and a foundation for

MATERIALS

PENCILS

- HB 0.2mm Orenz yellow mechanical pencil
- General Kimberly traditional pencils

ERASERS

- MONO Sero eraser
- Kneaded eraser

SURFACE

- Strathmore Mixed Media Paper

you to build your contrasting values. Note that having subtle contrast can be equally entrancing when used correctly. You'll learn this as you experiment and this instalment is meant to help understand the importance of contrast and how to harness its ability to create engaging and powerful work!



Timothy is a travelling independent artist showing and selling his work at conventions across the US.

See more of his art at www.vonnart.net.

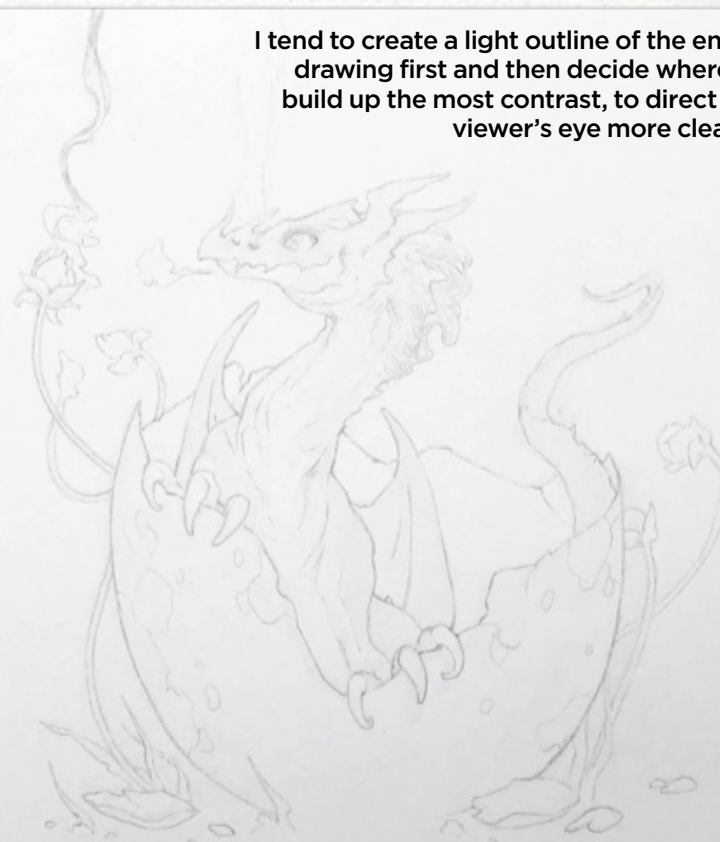
High contrast

Low contrast

Notice the difference in the hand drawing and how the left side is more impactful because of the high contrast between the subject matter and the background.

However, not all great use of contrast is high contrast. Low contrast can be used to add subtlety and give nuance as an impact for the overall composition.

I tend to create a light outline of the entire drawing first and then decide where to build up the most contrast, to direct the viewer's eye more clearly.

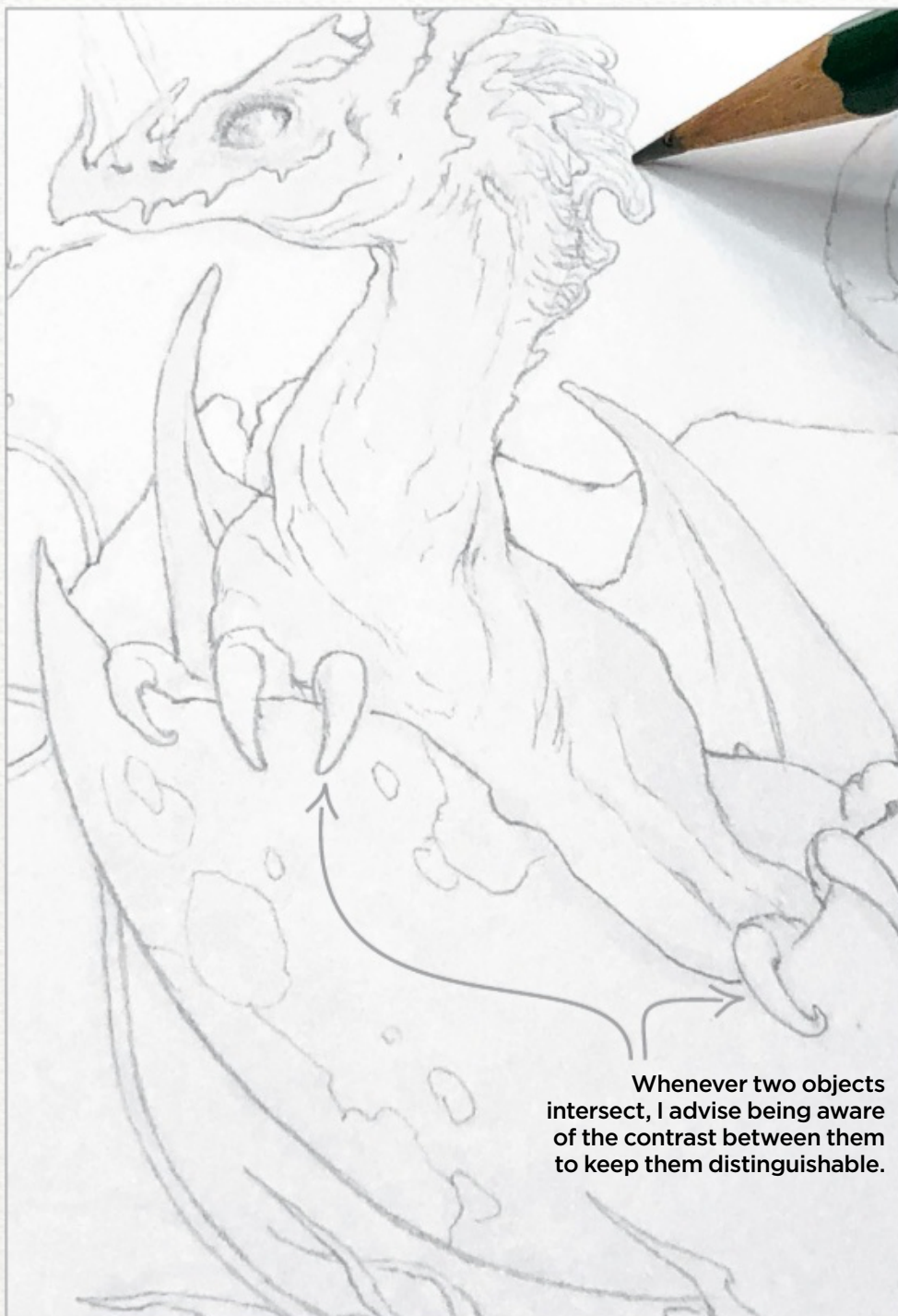


1 Understanding high and low contrast

It's crucial to first know the difference between low and high contrast, and when to use them. Low contrast usually has similar surrounding values between subjects and may even blend together. High contrast has a stark difference in value and attracts the viewer's eye as a point of interest.

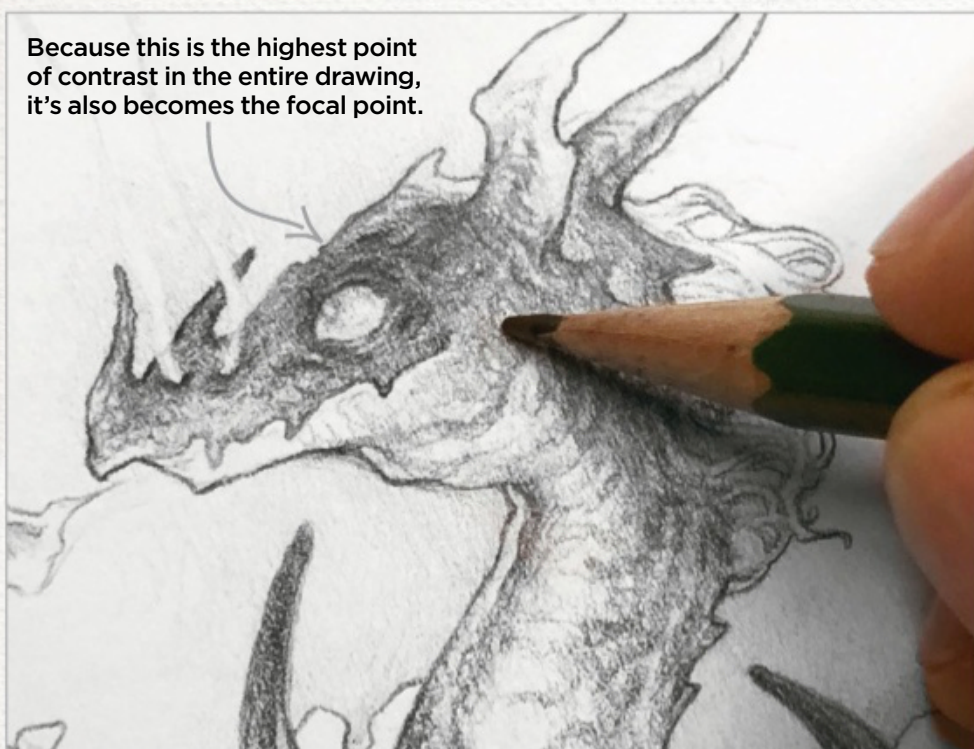
2 Start lighter either way

Regardless of whether you want to add high or low contrast to your drawing, I recommend keeping it light at first either way. Having a better foundation laid out to then decide which direction to go throughout the composition will help keep your values in check.



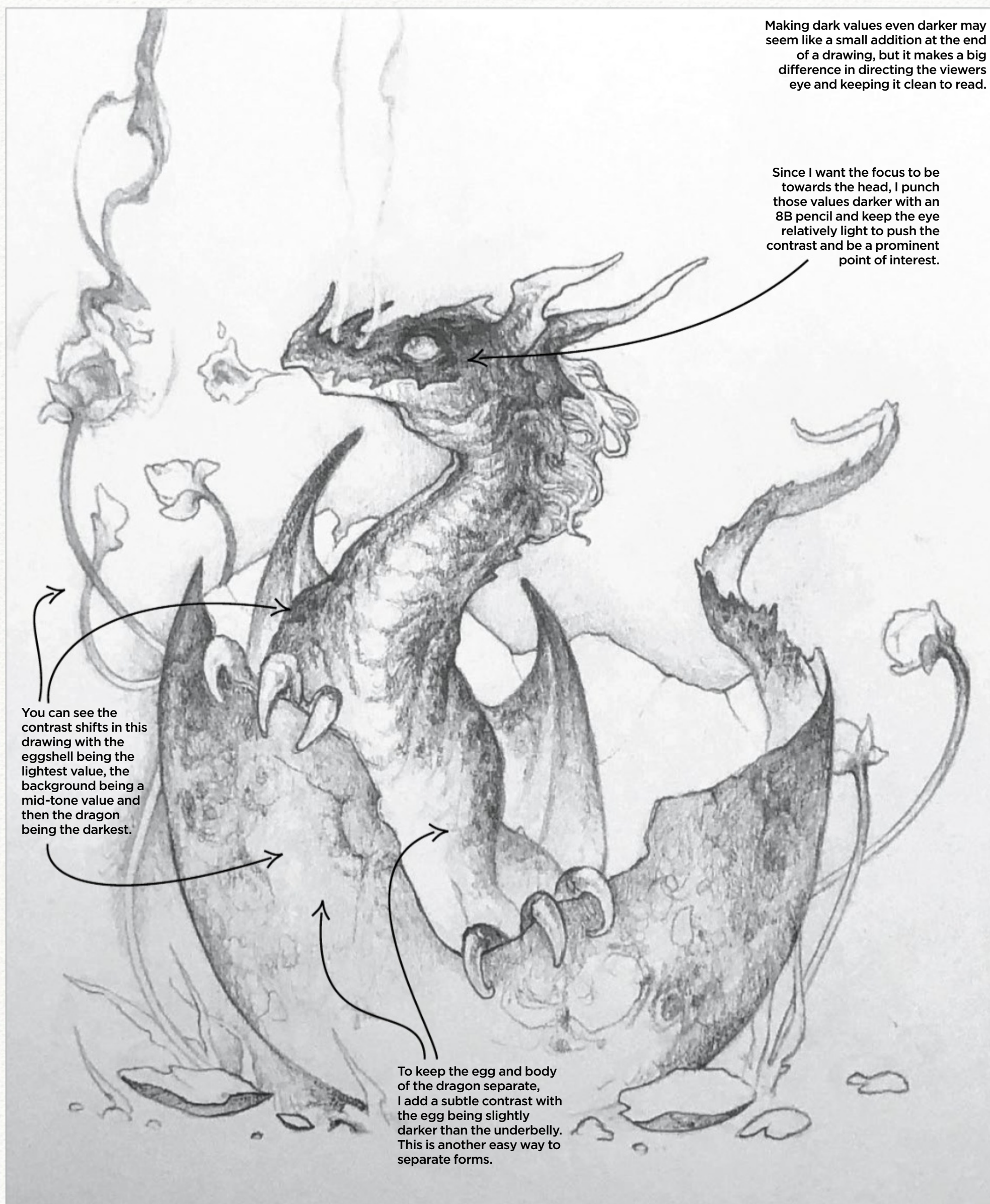
3 Contrast helps to separate form

Having a dark value pushed up against a lighter value will separate the two forms to the viewing eye. This can be a tool in your work when attempting to better separate forms and distinguish subject matters. Having an effective use of contrast will create a piece that's easier to read!



4 Directing the Eye

Using contrast enables you to control how the viewer will see your drawing and where their eye will be directed. By creating a source of well-placed high contrast, you're also creating a source of interest that may be the focal point of the piece simply because of the contrast. ➡



5 End boldly by pushing your dark values

After you've been building up your drawing with values, you should know where your highest points of contrast are. But if you want to create a bold finish, grab a pencil with a higher number on the B scale and punch up your dark values to drive that extra bit of contrast! ■

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First Impressions

✧ Marc Scheff ✧

Game of Thrones first drew a blank with this artist and educator...



Where did you grow up and how has this influenced your art?

I was born and raised in Boston and

remember many school trips to the MFA where I drank up the vast array of Greek and Egyptian art. It was around that time that I became interested in mythology, and stories told through images.

Does one person stand out as being helpful during your early years?

In fifth grade my teacher, Pam Purdy, encouraged me to follow my creative path. One day when I was focused working on an elaborate clay frog, she shooed away the kids who were teasing me. When I was done, she went and glazed and fired it. I was so proud.

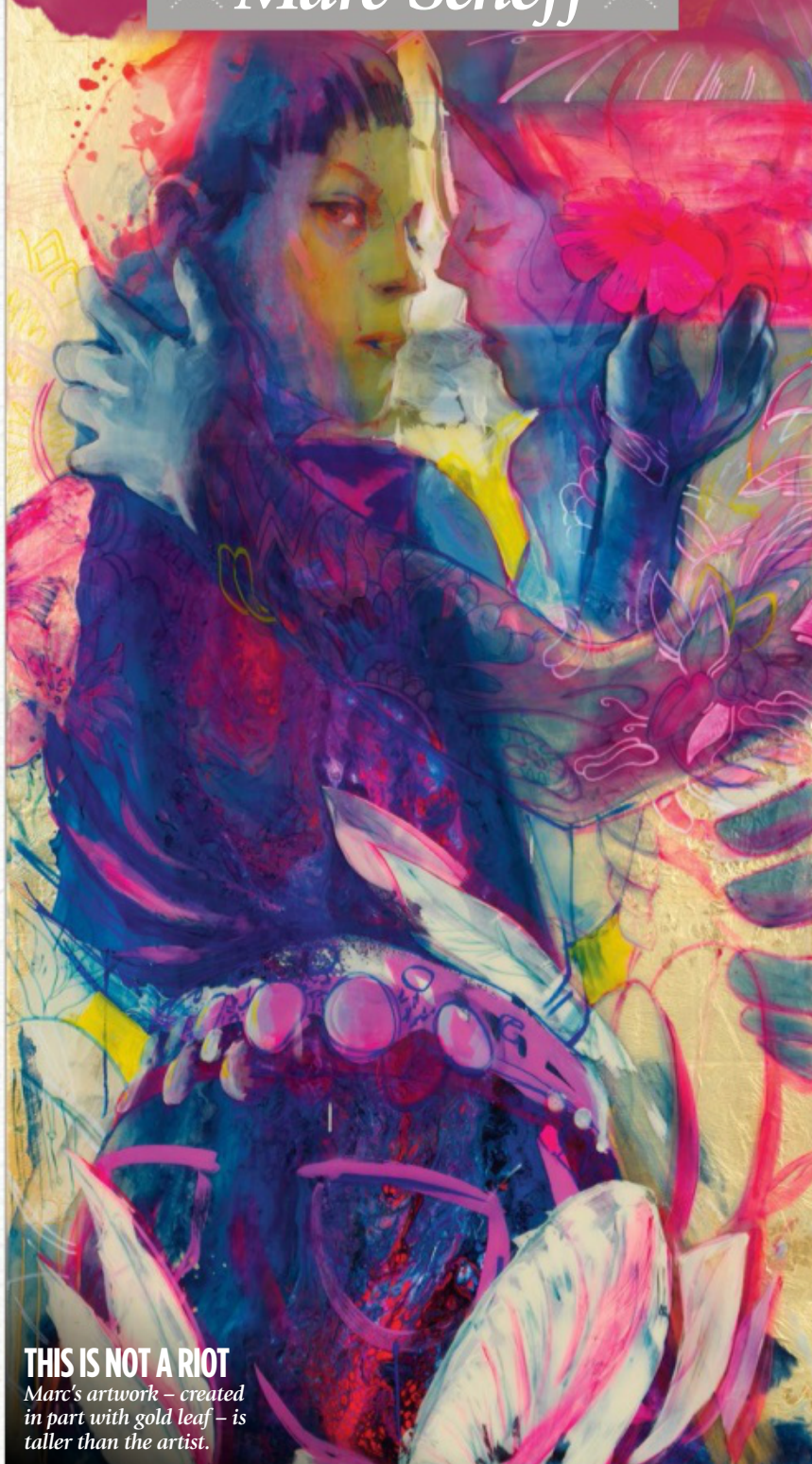
Tell us about your first paid commissioned piece?

That would have been right at the end of art school. I got commissioned for five illustrations for a property I'd never heard of. So I wikipedia'ed the information, gathered reference and made my art. I learned a lot on this job. It was for Game of Thrones...

What's the last piece that you finished, and how do the two artworks differ?

I'm constantly finishing pieces because my work is now in the gallery and art fair world. My digital

“Part of the work is finding a way to relate to the subjects”



THIS IS NOT A RIOT
Marc's artwork – created in part with gold leaf – is taller than the artist.



A MIDNIGHT TRAIN
“This mixed media piece represents a pivotal shift in both subject matter and process.”

illustration work was client driven; now I work in thick layers of resin and much more for myself, even though my paintings are still intended to be out in the world.

How has the art industry changed since you've been a part of it?

There are so many corners of the art industry. Speaking purely about commercial illustration, I've seen more awareness and support for artists to take their business seriously. My business partner and I run our own course and community

designed to do exactly that, because we've seen how even just a few tweaks to mindset or strategy can be a game-changer for artists.

Is creating art as a career all you thought it would be?

I didn't think it was even possible. I studied computer science in school because I was pretty sure you couldn't be an artist unless you were someone like Andy Warhol or Frida. Even after a second degree in illustration, my expectations and experience are always evolving. I suspect if I had firm expectations life would just laugh at that.

Can you describe the place where you usually create your art?

I work out of the top floor of our house in Brooklyn. One side is my office where I teach and run tech for Smart School, an online illustration mentorship programme. I also do all my planning and work on smaller paintings. On the other side is a skylit studio where I make my larger pieces and pour lots of resin.

What character or scene that you've painted do you most identify with?

Currently with my gallery work, part of the work is finding a way to relate to the subjects. I want to identify as strongly with a portrait of someone else as I would with a self-portrait.

In my illustration work, in a way I think it worked the same. I actually occasionally turned down jobs when I thought the characters in the story were espousing harmful ideologies and I just couldn't relate.

What advice would you give to your younger self to aid you on the way?

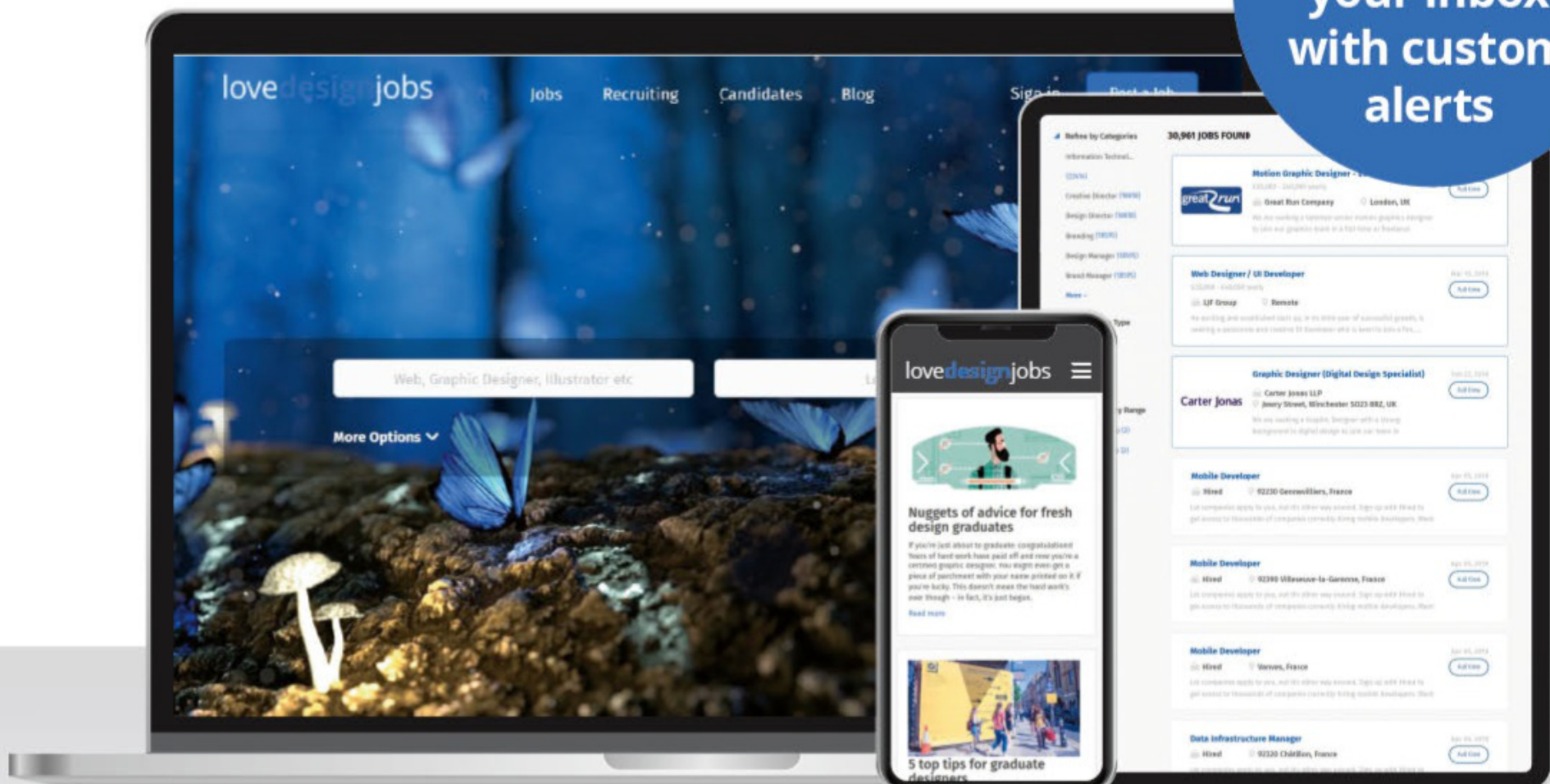
Draw and paint every day. Read books about art. It's okay for people to know you're giving real effort when you fail. It will take longer than you think, so enjoy the process of learning.

Marc creates work in all media on and in between layers of resin. Follow him at www.instagram.com/marcscheff.

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